One Hundred and Sixteen

SERMONS

Preached out of the

FIRST LESSONS

At *Morning* and *Evening* Prayer, for all SUNDAYS in the YEAR.

By *WILLIAM READING*, M. A.
Keeper of the LIBRARY at *Sion-College*.

VOLUME *the* FOURTH.

The SECOND EDITION.

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To the Reverend and Worſhipful

CAVENDISH NEVILE, *Eſq;*

At Chevet *near* Wakefield *in* Yorkſhire.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING for many Years been favour'd with your unmerited friendſhip, to my great benefit and comfort, I gladly take this opportunity to teſtifie my obligations to you and gratitude for the ſame. And therefore I have preſumed, without your knowledge, to inſert your name in this work, that my own Family at leaſt may be often put in

mind of ſo good a Benefactor. Not doubting however but your Name, always fortunate to me, will introduce me into many Families, and make me a ſort of Chaplain to them, by preaching to them in theſe Books. I am,

SIR,

Your moſt Obliged,

Faithful, Humble Servant,

WILLIAM READING.

THE TEXTS

Of the FOURTH VOLUME.

SERMON LXXXVII. On the Nineteenth *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Dan. iii. 16, 17, 18. *Shadrach, Meſhach, and Abednego anſwered and ſaid to the King: O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to anſwer thee in this matter. If it be ſo, our God whom we ſerve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not ſerve thy Gods, nor worſhip the Golden Image which thou haſt ſet up.*

Page 1

SERMON LXXXVIII. On the Nineteenth *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Dan. vi. 10. *Now when Daniel knew that the writing was ſigned, he went into his houſe, and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jeruſalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.* p. 14

SERMON LXXXIX. On the Twentieth *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Joel ii. 12, 13. *Therefore alſo now, ſaith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with faſting, and with weeping, and with mourning. —— And rent your Heart, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, ſlow to Anger, and of great Kindneſs, and repenteth him of the Evil.* p. 30

SERMON XC. On the Twentieth *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Micah vi. 9. *The Lord's voice cryeth unto the city, and the man of wiſdom ſhall ſee thy name: Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.* p. 42

SERMON XCI. On the Twenty-firſt *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Habak ii. 4. *Behold, his Soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him: but the Juſt ſhall live by his Faith.* p. 58

SERMON XCII. On the Twenty-firſt *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Prov. i. 33. *But whoſo hearkeneth to me, ſhall dwell ſafely, and ſhall be quiet from fear of evil.* p. 72

SERMON XCIII. On the Twenty-Second *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Prov. ii. 6. *For the Lord giveth Wiſdom: out of his mouth cometh Knowledge and Underſtanding.* p. 87

SER-

The TEXTS.

SERMON XCIV. On the Twenty-Second *Sunday* after TRINITY.

At St. *Alphage*, *Octob.* 18. 1724. at the Opening of the Church after Repairs, begun by a Legacy of Mrs. *Chriſtian Ruſſel.*

Prov. iii. 9, 10. *Honour the Lord with thy ſubſtance, and with the firſt-fruits of all thine increaſe: ſo ſhall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy preſſes ſhall burſt out with new wine.* p. 98

SERMON XCV. On the Twenty-third *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Prov. xi. 11. *By the Bleſſing of the upright the City is exalted: but it is overthrown by the Mouth of the wicked.* p. 112

SERMON XCVI. On the Twenty-third *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Prov. xii. 1. *Whoſo loveth inſtruction, loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof, is brutiſh.* p. 123

SERMON XCVII. On the Twenty-fourth *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Prov. xiii. 20. *He that walketh with wiſe Men ſhall be wiſe: but a Companion of Fools ſhall be deſtroyed.* p. 137

SERMON XCVIII. On the Twenty-fourth *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Prov. xiv. 13. *Even in laughter the heart is ſorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heavineſs.* p. 149

SER-

The TEXTS.

SERMON XCIX. On the Twenty-fifth *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Proverbs xv. 1. *A ſoft anſwer turneth away Wrath: but grievous words ſtir up Anger.* p. 163

SERMON C. On the Twenty-fifth *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Proverbs xvi. 21. *The wiſe in heart ſhall be called prudent; and the ſweetneſs of the lips encreaſeth learning.* p. 177

SERMON CI. On the Twenty-ſixth *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Proverbs xvii. 16. *Wherefore is there a Price in the hand of a Fool to get Wiſdom, ſeeing he hath no Heart to it?* p. 191

SERMON CII. On the Twenty-ſixth *Sunday* after TRINITY.

Proverbs xix. 5. *A falſe witneſs ſhall not be unpuniſhed: and he that ſpeaketh lies ſhall not eſcape.* p. 204

SERMON CIII. On the Firſt *Sunday* in ADVENT.

Iſaiah i. 11. *To what purpoſe is the multitude of your Sacrifices unto me, ſaith the Lord? I am full of the Burnt-offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beaſts, and I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-Goats.* p. 219

SERMON

The TEXTS.

SERMON CIV. On the Firſt *Sunday* in ADVENT.

Iſaiah ii. 19. *And they ſhall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majeſty, when he ariſeth to ſhake terribly the Earth.* p. 232

SERMON CV. On the Second *Sunday* in ADVENT.

Iſaiah v. 1, 2. *Now will I ſing to my well-beloved a ſong of my well-beloved touching his Vineyard: my well-beloved hath a Vineyard in a very fruitful Hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the ſtones thereof, and planted it with the choiceſt Vine, and built a Tower in the midſt of it, and alſo made a Wine-preſs therein: and he looked that it ſhould bring forth Grapes, and it brought forth wild Grapes.* p. 243

SERMON CVI. On the Second *Sunday* in ADVENT.

Iſaiah xxiv. 1. *Behold, the Lord maketh the Earth empty, and maketh it waſte, and turneth it upſide down, and ſcattereth abroad the Inhabitants thereof.* p. 256

SERMON CVII. On the Third *Sunday* in ADVENT.

Iſaiah xxv. 1. *O Lord thou art my God, I will exalt thee, I will praiſe thy Name; for thou haſt done wonderful Things; thy Counſels of old are Faithfulneſs and Truth.* p. 269

SER-

The TEXTS.

SERMON CVIII. On the Third *Sunday* in ADVENT.

Iſaiah xxvi. 1, 2. *In that day ſhall this ſong be ſung in the land of Judah: We have a ſtrong city: ſalvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth, may enter in.* p. 282

SERMON CIX. On the Fourth *Sunday* in ADVENT.

Iſaiah xxx. 7. *For the Egyptians ſhall help in vain, and to no purpoſe: Therefore have I cryed concerning this; their ſtrength is to ſit ſtill.* p. 297

SERMON CX. On the Fourth *Sunday* in ADVENT.

Iſaiah xxxii. 1. *Behold, a king ſhall reign in righteouſneſs, and princes ſhall rule in judgment.* p. 309

SERMON CXI. On CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Iſaiah ix. 6. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder, and his name ſhall be called, Wonderful, Counſellor, the mighty God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace.* p. 323

SERMON CXII. On CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Iſaiah vii. 14. *Behold, a Virgin ſhall conceive, and bear a Son, and ſhall call his name Immanuel.* p. 336

SER-

The TEXTS.

SERMON CXIII. On the First *Sunday* after CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Iſaiah xxxvii. 31, 32. *And the remnant that is eſcaped of the houſe of Judah, ſhall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jeruſalem ſhall go forth a remnant, and they that eſcape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of Hoſts ſhall do this.*

page 350

SERMON CXIV. On the First *Sunday* after CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Iſaiah xxxviii. 1. *In thoſe days was Hezekiah ſick unto death: and Iſaiah the prophet the ſon of Amos came unto him, and ſaid unto him: Thus ſaith the Lord, Set thine houſe in order; for thou ſhalt die, and not live.*

p. 363

SERMON CXV. On the Second *Sunday* after CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Iſaiah xli. 1. *Keep ſilence before me, O iſlands, and let the people renew their ſtrength: let them come near, then let them ſpeak: let us come near together in judgment.*

p. 377

SERMON CXVI. On the Second *Sunday* after CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Iſaiah xliii. 1, 2. *But now thus ſaith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Iſrael: Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by*

by thy name, thou art mine. When thou paſſeſt through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the Rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee: when thou walkeſt through the fire, thou ſhalt not be burnt, neither ſhall the flame kindle upon thee. p. 391

ERRATA.

VOL. I. Page 224. line 10. read *Summ of.*

VOL. II. Preface page 16. line 4 from the bottom, read *true.* p. 34. l. 21. read *afterwards.* p. 52. l. 3. read *enervated.* p. 272. l. 3. read *contrary.*

VOL. III. Page 11. line laſt, read *doing.* p. 18. l. 22. read *followed.* p. 218. l. 21. read *idolatry.* p. 320. l. laſt read *authority.* p. 426. l. 3. read *of.*

SERMON

SERMON LXXXVII.

On the Nineteenth Sunday *after* TRINITY.

MORNING.

DAN. iii. 16, 17, 18.

Shadrach, Meſhach, and Abednego anſwered and ſaid to the King: O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to anſwer thee in this matter. If it be ſo, our God whom we ſerve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not ſerve thy Gods, nor worſhip the Golden Image which thou haſt ſet up.

SUCH was the courageous Anſwer of three noble Captives of the Tribe of *Judah*, to their redoubted Conqueror the King of *Babylon*, when with rage and fury he called them before him, to anſwer to an accuſation brought againſt them, that they refuſed to fall down and worſhip a golden Image which he had lately erected, in the eighteenth year of his reign, as the LXX Interpreters affirm, and which he had com-

manded all People of his Dominions, Natives and Foreigners, to adore as a Deity, upon pain of ſuffering death by fire, the puniſhment which Idolaters have commonly inflicted upon thoſe who could not comply with their Image-worſhip.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR was the more impatient to be refuſed by theſe three men, becauſe he had done them the favour to ſelect them out of all the Captives of *Jewry*, to be educated in his own Court, under his own eye and notice, and had converſed often with them, and advanced them to high Offices in the Province of *Babylon*. He reſented it moſt heinouſly, that theſe three men alone ſhould diſobey his Edict, while the Princes and People of all other Nations and Languages, whom he had carried Captive to *Babylon*, fell down upon their knees at the appointed times, and performed their devotions very punctually. Among whom theſe Diſſenters might very probably ſee crowds of their own Countrymen, who being now Bond-ſlaves in *Babylon* for their Domeſtick Idolatry, were ſatisfying the divine Vengeance, threatned to them of old on that account, that *they ſhould ſerve dumb Idols in a ſtrange Land.* Deut. iv. 28.

IT is a queſtion properly put upon this Occaſion, how it comes to paſs that we hear nothing of *Daniel* in this buſineſs, and by what good fortune he could eſcape this fiery Tryal. Moſt certain it is, that whereever he was, he continued faithful to his God, and conſtant to his former character. He that afterwards ſignalized his Piety, by perſevering in it till he was thrown to the Lions, would not certainly have been diverted from it by the menaces of a fiery Furnace. The anſwer of *Rabbi Aben Ezra* to this Queſtion is this: 'The *Chaldeans*, ſays he, who accuſed the

'other

'other three, durſt not preſume to accuſe *Daniel*, in 'conſideration of his ſuperlative dignity, and the ho-'nour which the King himſelf had formerly done him, 'proſtrating himſelf before him, and perfuming him 'with an Oblation of ſweet Odours, in devotion to 'the excellent Spirit which was in him.' This is improved by St. *Chryſoſtom* with a fine ſtrain of Wit and Piety. 'The Providence of God, ſays he, in much 'wiſdom ordered it, that *Daniel* ſhould not accom-'pany the other three in the Furnace. The King 'had named him *Belteſhazzar*, by the name of his 'God. And to the virtue of that name the *Chal-'deans* would have imputed this deliverance from the 'fire. His abſence diſarm'd them of this argument, 'and left them under the undeniable conviction, that 'this deliverance was wrought by the God of *Iſrael.*

BUT to come to a more particular diſcuſſion of the matter before us. In this great event we may ſee,

I. THE bold Impiety of *Nebuchadnezzar* in erecting this Idol, and uſing means as he did to compel all People, eſpecially his Jewiſh Captives, to fall down and worſhip it.

II. THE exemplary courage and fidelity of theſe men, in withſtanding the impetuous paſſion of the King, and ſuffering all the effects of his rage and fury, rather than yield to the impiety of worſhiping his Idol.

III. THE happy iſſue of their Conſtancy, and triumph of their Faith in this conflict.

And I*ſt*, AS to the Idol itſelf, though the Sacred Text ſays nothing of the ſhape of it, yet I think it is not doubted but that it was made in the figure of a man: ſome think it was intended for *Belus*, the Founder of the *Babylonian* Royal Family, others for *Nabo-*

pollaſſer, this King's Father; but a third Opinion is, that it was a model of that Image which *Nebuchadnezzar* had ſeen in his dream, in the foregoing Chapter, which he might take to be the Genius of his Kingdom, and which therefore he might hope to render propitious to him and his Affairs, by dedicating to him this magnificent Statue, and through it offering to him Divine Honours and Adorations.

THIS indeed was agreeable enough to the Theology of the ancient *Gentiles*, who thus venerated their peculiar and tutelar Deities. But it was more unpardonable in this King than in others, by reaſon of the long Commerce which he had with the *Jews*, which makes it impoſſible to conceive that he could be ignorant of this firſt and greateſt Article of their Religion, *That there was but one God, and that he was to be worſhipped in a ſpiritual way, without any material Reſemblance.* It was impoſſible for this King, who was God's Inſtrument in deſtroying *Jeruſalem*, and carrying away the *Jews* Captive, not to have heard, that theſe Calamities befel them on account of their forſaking the ſpiritual worſhip of God, and corrupting their Religion with Idolatries. He knew ſome of their Prophets, particularly *Jeremiah*, for whom he had a ſpecial regard, and gave charge concerning him to *Nebuzaradan* Captain of his Guard, at the ſpoiling of *Jeruſalem*, ſaying, *Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm, but treat him in every thing as he ſhall require.* Jer. xxxix. 12. He muſt needs know how this Prophet declaim'd againſt Idols in general, not only thoſe of his own People, but of all the Nations round about them, not ſparing the Idols of *Babylon* among the reſt. He was well acquainted with *Daniel* and theſe three men, whom he had appointed to be bred

bred up in his Court, and to be fitted for the high Offices of his Kingdom, to which he quickly preferred them. He had lately made tryal of *Daniel*'s true Religion and Wiſdom, in declaring and explaining to him a Dream, which none of his Magicians nor Aſtrologers were able to find out; and freely acknowledges to him upon this occaſion; *of a truth*, ſays he, *your God is a God of Gods and Lord of Kings, and a Revealer of Secrets, ſeeing thou couldeſt reveal this Secret.*

NOW ſince *Nebuchadnezzar* had ſuch Occaſions to know the true God, and had received ſuch favours from him, it might have been juſtly expected that he ſhould have renounced the errors of his Fathers, and have embraced the worſhip of that God whom he owned to be much ſuperior to all others. But inſtead of this, to add new Idols to the old ones, was a great aggravation of his Sin. And it was ſtill more ſinful in him, to compel men, by the terrors of a fiery Furnace, to proſtitute their Senſe and Reaſon and good Conſcience to his monſtrous Image.

I will not now ſtand to enquire how far it may be lawful to enforce the profeſſion even of true Religion by Temporal Penalties. There is a Zeal for God, which his own word approves of in Magiſtrates and Miniſters; and there is a Zeal without knowledge, which runs out into a criminal Perſecution, for which St. *Paul* ſays *that he obtained mercy, becauſe he acted ignorantly*, 1 Tim. i. 13. But ſurely *Nebuchadnezzar* could not plead this excuſe. He muſt be well acquainted, (for the reaſons aforeſaid) with the Religion of theſe men; he had the greateſt Obligations to their God, and was bound to them by the laws of Hoſpitality, and by the faithful ſervice which we may juſtly ſuppoſe they rendered him in their reſpective Stations.

In all civil caſes they honoured and obeyed him as their King, only they could not worſhip his Gods. And therefore for him, who knew all this, to attempt to put ſuch a force upon their pure Conſciences, was the height of impiety and cruelty mixed together.

II. LET us now turn to the contemplation of the exemplary courage and fidelity of theſe Men, who withſtood the impetuous paſſion of the King, and choſe to ſuffer all the effects of his Rage and Fury, rather than yield to the Impiety of worſhipping his Idol. To behold on the one hand a Fire kindled, on purpoſe to conſume thoſe who would not adore this Image; and on the other hand, an inexorable King tranſported with furious zeal for his Religion, threatning their denial with immediate Puniſhment, and ready to ſee Execution done with his own Eyes; to ſee their own poor number of three who refuſed, condemned by the many thouſands about them who complied; to reflect upon the favours they had received from the King, how highly he had exalted them above his native Subjects, how happily they might live under him ſtill for many Years, could they but ſubmit to bow the Knee at his Command; theſe were all very ſhocking Conſiderations, which would have confounded the generality of Men, and have induced them, if not to proſtrate themſelves before the Idol, yet at leaſt to have fallen down before the King, and have craved time of him for farther deliberation, about a matter of ſo great concern to them. But inſtead of flying to the refuge of affrighted, confounded Men, they conſtantly and bravely end the Matter upon the ſpot, in a very ſhort and clear Speech, *O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to anſwer thee in this Matter, i. e.* 'We do not want time to deliberate and frame

'a ſoft and artful anſwer to this Demand. It is well 'known to you and all the World that we worſhip 'but one God, and that without any material or ſen-'ſible repreſentation of him. To his heavenly will 'and diſpoſal we reſign our ſelves; if he pleaſes, he 'can and will deliver us from this Fire which you 'have prepared to conſume us. But if he ſhall ſuf-'fer it to devour us, we yield to it, rather than ſerve 'your Gods, or worſhip this Image which you have 'ſet up.'

THIS was a brave reſolute Anſwer, and well ſuited to the Occaſion. In other caſes Kings ought to be anſwered with great Reſpect and Reverence, and none more conformable to ſuch civil reſpects than *Daniel* and his Fellows, as we learn from this very Book. But when the royal command is to diſhonour God, by giving his glory to Idols, then we muſt retreat under the Protection of the King of Kings, and bravely let earthly Potentates know, that nothing which they can do for us or againſt us, ſhall be able to ſeduce us from the Service of our ſupreme Maſter. *Whether he will deliver us or not*, ſaid theſe Martyrs, *be it known to you, that we will not worſhip your Gods.*

THIS is a plain argument that their hopes were extended beyond this Life: for had they thought the fiery Furnace could have put an end to their Being, and that there ſhould nothing have remained of them for God to reward or puniſh in another State, I am of opinion they would have bowed to this Image, rather than have burned for it. For however ſome affirm, that Truth is ſo much more beautiful and connatural to the Soul of Man than Falſehood, that a wiſe Man would prefer it even for its own ſake, though nothing was to be expected after this Life; yet if it

were to be vindicated with the utter extinction of the whole Man, and that on the contrary his receding from it would prolong his Exiſtence and his Happineſs, I am apt to think that it would in ſuch caſe become an allowed rule of Wiſdom, to recede from the Truth when it could not be held without ſuffering the loſs of Soul and Body for the ſake of it. But to ſpeak more intelligibly, and agreeably to the divine OEconomy, we are very ſure that God never did nor can impoſe that thing as a Duty upon us, in the performance of which we ſhall not find our intereſt and gain to be far greater than our loſs. Which if it cannot be made good to us in this Life, as it cannot poſſibly be, after life it ſelf is taken away, then a reward muſt remain for us in that which is to come.

AND this was certainly the motive, why theſe Martyrs of the true God did ſo chearfully ſurrender their Bodies to the Flames, ſubmitting themſelves to him, to live or die, as he ſaw moſt conducive to his own Glory; firmly believing that if the fire diſſolved their Bodies, their Souls ſhould paſs into his more immediate Preſence, and be made Partakers of his immortal Felicities; and that he would reproduce their bodies again in the reign of the *Meſſiah*; for St. *Paul* numbers them among ſuch Believers, *Heb.* xi. and ſays that by virtue of this Faith, *they quenched the violence of the Fire, i. e.* they had ſuch lively, ſure, and preſent views of God and his Kingdom, with which their Spirits were ſo much exalted, that they could have diſſolved in the Flames with little or no ſenſe of Pain, for the greatneſs of the Joys which flowed in upon them. 'In this ſacred conflict, ſays *Zeno Veronenſis*, 'their eyes were ſo fixed upon God, that they ſaw 'not the Fire, and ſo intent upon the Crown of Mar-

'tyrdom,

'tyrdom, that they forgot the pains of Death: Thus 'being raiſed above the mounting Flames, and ſtrug-'ling Balls of Fire, they gave the Spectators a glori-'ous Demonſtration, that the Souls of Holy Men are 'of greater Strength and Fortitude, than the moſt 'potent Tyrants upon Earth, with all their Inſtru-'ments of Death about them.'

I believe I need not ſay much to perſuade thoſe, who have a competent knowledge of the Sufferings of Holy Martyrs, that many of them have given the beſt Evidence, that the conſolations of God have far exceeded the torments of Men in their greateſt Extremities. I ſhall produce but one inſtance to this purpoſe, a paſſage of undoubted Credit, in *Socrates Hiſt. Eccl.* B. 3. C. 19. Where we read that 'When the Empe-'ror *Julian* perſecuted Chriſtians in the fourth Cen-'tury, amongſt others he cauſed grievous tortures to 'be inflicted upon the Body of a young Man, whoſe 'name was *Theodorus*, who was ſo horribly ſlaſhed and 'mangled by the Executioner, that it was thought he 'would never outlive it. However it pleaſed God in 'a wonderful manner to reſtore him.' *Ruffinus* who wrote an Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory ſays, 'That a long time 'after he asked this *Theodorus* in Converſation, how 'acute his Pain was in the time of his Suffering; 'and that his anſwer was, that it was very light and 'ſhort; for that while he was upon the Rack, a young 'Man ſtood by him, who wiped off the Sweat cauſ-'ed by his Agony, and mightily cheared his Spirits, 'ſo that he felt much more pleaſure than pain all the 'time of his Torture.'

THIS brings us to the IIId and laſt thing I propoſed, *viz.* to obſerve the happy Iſſue of theſe Men's Conſtancy, and the triumph of their Faith in this

conflict.

conflict. The enraged King had power to throw them into the Fire, but he had no power to make the Fire burn them. He ſaw his Executioners caſt them bound into the midſt of the overheated Furnace, and ſate him down at a diſtance, meaning to feed his Eyes with a pleaſing Vengeance; but when he thought he ſhould have ſeen them ſpeedily flame out, and then fall into Aſhes, he ſaw, to his amazement, a fourth Man come to them, who looſed their Bonds, ſet them upon their Feet, and went before them, all four of them walking in the midſt of the Fire, and ſinging Praiſes to God, without receiving any hurt. The King, when he called to his Counſellors upon this occaſion, told them, *that the Form of the fourth Man was like the Son of God.* By this he might mean that he appeared to be a very auguſt, majeſtick Perſon; a god-like Man, as we would ſay. This is as much as the Expreſſion ſometimes imports. But becauſe he could not think that a Man of Fleſh and Blood could enter there, and preſerve the Sufferers in ſuch a miraculous manner, he muſt rather mean that it was ſome Divine Being ſent from Heaven for this purpoſe. Now the Holy Angels are in ſacred Writ often called *the Sons of God*; and as to their Guardianſhip of good Men, it was univerſally believed by the People of old Times, agreeably to that of the Pſalmiſt, xxxiv. *The Angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* And in that part of this Hiſtory, which is placed among the apocryphal Writings, becauſe not found in the *Hebrew*, it is ſaid, ver. 25. 'That the 'Angel of the Lord came down into the Oven, toge-'ther with *Azarias* and his Fellows, and ſmote the 'Flame of the Fire out of the Oven; and made the 'midſt of the Furnace as it had been a moiſt whiſt-

ling

'ling Wind, ſo that the Fire touched them not at all, 'neither hurt nor troubled them.' Which Words give us ſome Idea how the Heat was reſtrained from burning them; it was all turned to the out-ſides, ſo that it ſlew thoſe that approached the Mouth of it, while it hurt not theſe Men who were within.

BUT we muſt not forget here, that ſeveral of the antient Chriſtian Fathers were of opinion, that this Perſon who came to the Holy Martyrs and delivered them from the Fire, was moſt properly and truly the Son of God, the ſecond Perſon in the bleſſed Trinity. And this was ſo generally the Perſuaſion of thoſe Times, that in the Anthem which they ſung in the Church on *Eaſter-day*, this was one Verſicle, *He that delivered the three Children out of the fiery Furnace, is riſen from the Grave.*

TO this it will be objected, that it is not credible *Nebuchadnezzar* knew any thing of this Son of God, ſo as to be able to ſay, that this Perſon was like him: And we may readily allow that he did not: and yet this Objection does not at all overthrow our Hypotheſis. For the King might mean in general, that he ſeemed to be ſome Divine Perſon; and this Perſon might be the particular and only Son of God; who in all probability appeared upon the Earth in human Shape upon ſome Occaſions, long before his Incarnation. And ſince many of the wiſeſt and beſt of the Ancients were perſuaded that he appeared now, we ought not to explode their Opinion, except we have ſome ſtronger Objections againſt it.

LET us conclude, as theſe holy Men concluded, with rendring and reſerving to the moſt High, the Honour which is peculiarly due to his Divine Majeſty, always *bleſſing, praiſing and magnifying him above*

all

all his Works. I confeſs the Hymn which I allude to, ſtands among our apocryphal Scriptures; but it is ſo devout and pious, that it has always been thought to deſerve a place in the Service, not only of our preſent, but of the moſt antient Church. Some perhaps may think that it wants Spirit, and is not pertinent to the Occaſion; but St. *Chryſoſtom* has taken the pains to ſet it in a due light, and to ſhew the juſt Propriety of every Part of it. That learned and eloquent Father obſerves, that it was very proper for theſe holy Men to teach the *Chaldeans*, upon this occaſion, to diſtinguiſh accurately between the Creator and the Creatures: becauſe there is ſcarce any thing from the higheſt Angel to the loweſt Reptile, which the *Gentiles* had not idolized and venerated with Divine Worſhip. While then they ſo particularly enumerate the Creatures, and ſummon them all to magnify and adore one God, they intimate hereby the Unity of the Divine Nature, and the Dependence which his Creatures have upon him, and that he is not to be circumſcribed in any Place, or repreſented by any Figure. And thus much for the general Deſign of this Anthem. I cannot at preſent attend the holy Father in deſcanting upon all the Branches of it. But two Points I ſhall mention for a taſte of the Propriety of the whole. When theſe Confeſſors call upon the Fire and Heat to bleſs the Lord, they admoniſh the *Chaldeans*, who worſhipped the Fire as a Deity, to take Notice how effectually in this preſent caſe, it had been reſtrained and over-ruled by the God of *Iſrael*. And when they call upon themſelves, by their firſt Names of *Ananias*, *Azarias*, and *Miſael*, to praiſe the Lord, they do hereby diſclaim all Power in themſelves to have wrought this wonderful Deliverance, and prevent the ſuperſtitious

Spectators

Spectators from deifying them, or thinking of them more highly than they ought to think.

LET us endeavour to be thus humbly and dutifully affected towards the Lord our God, arrogating nothing of his Glory to our ſelves, nor preſuming to aſcribe it to other of the Creatures; but ever *giving him the Honour due unto his Name, and worſhipping him with an holy Worſhip*; that ſo we may enjoy the Salvation of his bleſſed Son, and be reſcued by him from the Fire of eternal Puniſhment in the World to come. To him with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, *&c.*

SERMON LXXXVIII.

On the Nineteenth Sunday *after* TRINITY.

EVENING.

DAN. vi. 10.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was ſigned, he went into his houſe, and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jeruſalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

THE Prophet *Iſaiah*, Chap. xxxix. had told *Hezekiah*, that the days were coming, when ſome of his poſterity *ſhould be ſervants and chamberlains in the palace of the King of Babylon.* Which prophecy may be ſaid to have had its accompliſhment in *Daniel*, if indeed he was of the Seed Royal, as Commentators conclude he was from this Book which bears his name, and of which he was the author. In the beginning of which he informs us, that he was carried away captive from *Jeruſalem* to *Babylon*, in the third year of the reign of *Jehoiakim* King of *Judah*. And he continued in the ſervice of the Kings of *Babylon* and their Succeſſors, the whole of his remaining life, which was very long:

long: For he was about nineteen or twenty years old at the beginning of the captivity, and he lived to ſee the reſtoration of his People by *Cyrus*: So that he muſt be ninety or upwards, when he died.

IN this ſtate of life *Daniel* attained to a moſt illuſtrious and honourable character: Particularly he ſignalized himſelf by an eminent piety, wiſdom, ſpirit of prophecy, and a capacity fit for the higheſt ſtation of civil Government.

I. *DANIEL* was a perſon of heroick piety, which had plainly the aſcendant over all his ſenſual paſſions and appetites. He was brought a tender youth to *Babylon*, and *Nebuchadnezzar* had ordered that he ſhould eat and drink of the proviſions of the royal Table: Which *Daniel* was ſo far from being pleaſed with, that he carefully avoided them. For he conſidered that thoſe proviſions often conſiſted of ſuch things as were forbidden him by the Law of his God. And beſides, they were by certain libations and ceremonies firſt offered to Idols, and their bleſſing was invocated upon them: So that *Daniel* could not partake of them without entring into a kind of communion with thoſe idols; which he was reſolved to avoid at any rate.

TO this end he applied to the Steward, to change his royal allowance of meat and wine into a diet of pulſe and water. The Steward was afraid leſt this diet ſhould make *Daniel* look ſo thin and pale, that the King would diſcover it, and puniſh him with the loſs of his head, for diſobeying his orders. Whereupon *Daniel* begged of him, and obtained his leave, to try this way of living for ten days; at the end of which he appeared freſher and fatter than thoſe Children which had their daily portion from the King's Table.

THIS

THIS proves what I aſſerted, that *Daniel*'s piety was above his ſenſual appetites; and it likewiſe ſhews the ſtrength of his faith in the power and goodneſs of God, that he could make the meaneſt fare as nouriſhing as the beſt; and the ſucceſs anſwered his expectation.

AGAIN, when *Nebuchadnezzar* wanted to recover the memory of a dream which he had forgot; and after an ineffectual tryal of all his Aſtrologers and Diviners, *Daniel* alone could help him to the account of it, with the interpretation, hear and admire his piety when he was but twenty two years old. *The ſecret*, ſays he, *which the King demands, is not to be diſcovered by any art or wiſdom of men. None but the God of Heaven is able to reveal it. And he hath revealed it to me, not for any wiſdom that I have more than other men; but for their ſakes who ſhould make known the interpretation, and that the King might know the thoughts of his own heart.*

BUT the moſt eminent inſtance of *Daniel*'s piety, is that which we have here before us in the words of my Text; That when he knew there was a Law enacted by the King and his Senators, that any man who ſhould ſay his prayers in thirty days from that time, ſhould moſt certainly be thrown into a den of hungry Lions, he deſpiſed this Law as impious and abſurd, and did not abate one tittle of his devotions for fear of it: But went freely and without concealment to his Oratory three times a day, and opening his windows towards *Jeruſalem*, kneeled down upon his knees, and performed his devotions of prayer and thankſgiving, juſt as he had been uſed to do at other times. This was ſerving God with his life and fortunes indeed; both which he forfeited to the Law by this

this ſervice, and had certainly loſt them, had not God appeared for him, and ſaved him by a miraculous deliverance.

FINALLY, let us hear what a teſtimony God himſelf gives of the piety of *Daniel*, by the Prophet *Ezekiel* who lived at the ſame time; Chap. xiv. *Tho'*, ſays he, *Noah, Daniel, and Job lived all together in this Land, yet would I lay it deſolate.* Which is as much as to ſay, that nothing was ſo likely to have prevailed with God, as the united prayers of theſe three Men. A moſt high and honourable commendation of *Daniel's* piety.

II. *DANIEL's* wiſdom was ſo incomparably great, that it was grown into a Proverb, even when he was but thirty ſix years old. For thus we read in the ſame Prophet, *Ezek.* Chap. xxviii. *Behold, thou art wiſer,* or thinkeſt thy ſelf wiſer, *than Daniel; ſo that no ſecret can be hidden from thee.* This is ſpoken to *Ethbaal* King of *Tyre,* as a reproof of the high conceit which he had of himſelf. And it ſhews at the ſame time, that *Daniel's* wiſdom was ſo celebrated all over the Eaſt, that for any one to be eſteemed comparable to him herein, was as much as to ſay, that he was equal to the wiſeſt of men.

WE have heard before how *Daniel* revealed and interpreted *Nebuchadnezzar's* dream, which none of the wiſe men of *Babylon* could find out; and how modeſtly he acknowledged that he had not diſcovered the ſecret by any wiſdom that he had of his own ſuperior to that of other men; but that it was revealed to him by the ſpecial favour and goodneſs of the God of Heaven. This modeſty was not the leaſt part of his wiſdom. Indeed no man ever deſerved the character of wiſe, or ever maintained it long, who was wiſe in

his own conceit, perſuaded of his own ſufficiency, deſtitute of that humility, and fear of God, and ſenſe of the neceſſity of his aſſiſtance, which is the foundation of all ſound wiſdom. *Daniel*, by arrogating nothing to himſelf, but aſcribing all his knowledge to the Divine Bounty, was led by this principle to pray unto God for the illumination of his Holy Spirit, to ſhew him his way in all difficult caſes, to inſtruct him in things which were paſt man's underſtanding. And for every ſuch inſtruction he never failed to bleſs and glorifie God, to confeſs him before Kings and Princes; inſomuch that *Nebuchadnezzar*, tho' an incorrigible idolater, and a man of Luciferian pride, yet frankly declared, *Of a truth your God is a God of Gods, and a Lord of Kings, and a revealer of ſecrets*; and he praiſed, extolled, and honoured this King of Heaven, confeſſing that all his works were truth, and his ways judgment, and that he was able to abaſe all thoſe who proudly exalted themſelves. And tho' he uſed violence with ſome, to compel them to worſhip his graven Image, yet it does not appear that he ever offered to put ſuch a force upon *Daniel*; it is much more probable, that he left him entirely free in the exerciſe of his religion.

HOWEVER, it was a great part of *Daniel*'s wiſdom, and indeed the wiſeſt thing that he could do, to adhere to the worſhip of his God, againſt all the dangers which were thrown in his way, to deter him from it. Thus, at his firſt coming to *Babylon*, he took a wiſe reſolution, and it proved the foundation of his happineſs there, that he would not defile himſelf with the portion of the King's meat, nor with the wine which he drank, for the reaſons beforementioned. By keeping himſelf thus undefiled, his heart

heart became the Temple of the Holy Spirit, which enlightened him ſo, that he had clear viſions of God, and was, as I may ſay, admitted to his counſels, and foreſaw what he was about to do; which favours had never been vouchſafed him, if he had not preſerved a pure heart; for none but the pure in heart can thus ſee God.

THUS again, in his advanced age, when he was ſeventy five years old, and had outlived *Nebuchadnezzar* and all his race, and had a penalty ſet upon him under a new King, that he ſhould die a horrid death, if he was known to ſay his prayers in thirty days, he readily ſaw and choſe the wiſeſt courſe, which was, to continue firm in his duty to God, and truſt him with the iſſue. This was all contrary to the rules of human policy, ſo far as they are known to us at this day. A man who would have acted *Daniel*'s part amongſt us, would have been counted ill-mannered, fool-hardy, and even deſerving of the threatned puniſhment, if he had run into the ſnare of this Law, when there was ſuch an eaſie way to avoid it. For what did it require of him? not the change of his religion, but only a ſuſpenſion of the publick exerciſe of it for thirty days: After which he might lawfully return to it again; and in the mean time he might ſay his prayers to himſelf, and lift up his heart to God in ſecret, without giving any offence, or incurring any penalty at all. This is the language of the men amongſt us, who are eſteemed for good ſenſe and reaſon, and there is certainly a vaſt majority of them in our preſent World. I dare not ſay that I believe *Daniel* had a chappel in his houſe, where his Domeſticks, who were of his own religion, worſhipped God along with him. I dare not ground any thing

upon this conjecture, becauſe I find none but himſelf called to an account for the breach of the Law. However, this is plain from the Text, that he had a room in his houſe, wherein he uſually worſhipped God; and if others of his ſervants or dependants met here before, 'tis likely they now forbore, upon the account of this Law made againſt it. But *Daniel* went into this room three times a-day, as before, and opened his windows, and ſaid his prayers publickly enough to be taken notice of. He had no mind to conceal himſelf, becauſe he reſolved by his practice to glorifie his God, to declare that he regarded him above all things, and to let thoſe who had made this Law, underſtand, that in his opinion they had done a very ill thing.

NOW this, I ſay, was wiſdom in *Daniel*, that he did not diſcontinue the exerciſe of his religion, as if he were ſtill to chuſe it, or to learn the importance of it; as if he were halting between two maſters, and conſidering to which ſide it were beſt for him to incline. That he did not offer any pitiful petition for licence to enjoy the liberty of his conſcience; for this had been to betray the cauſe of God, and to ſubmit it to the pleaſure of God's Enemies, whether his ſervants ſhould worſhip him. I do not ſay that this is a conſtancy which men of all religions ſhould be encouraged to glory in: For then the worſhippers of *Baal* ſhould be as inflexible as the ſervants of the God of *Iſrael*. But according to the appeal of *Elijah* and other Prophets, *let Baal plead for himſelf*, and give as good proofs of his Divinity as had been given by the God of *Iſrael*. *Daniel* knew his God as a Prophet, and he was well acquainted with his diſpenſations towards his own People, and particularly with that freſh

inſtance

inſtance of his mercy towards three of his companions in captivity, who had been thrown into a fiery furnace for their adherence to their God. Their anſwer and their ſucceſs were a clear direction to any good man how to acquit himſelf in the like caſe. For when *Nebuchadnezzar* bid them worſhip his Idol, and ſhewed them the burning furnace which was prepared for them, if they refuſed; *O Nebuchadnezzar*, ſaid they, *we are not careful to anſwer thee in this matter. If it be ſo, our God whom we ſerve is able to deliver us from this burning furnace, and he will deliver us: But if not, be it known to thee, O King, that we will not ſerve thy Gods, nor worſhip thy golden Image which thou haſt ſet up.*

WE cannot doubt but that *Daniel*, upon the like occaſion, reaſoned with himſelf exactly after the ſame manner. 'I have nothing at all to ſay to this Law, 'but to diſregard it in my practice; and go on to 'pray to my God, and honour him as I have ever 'done. I have ſerved him ſo many years, in which 'I have ſeen his goodneſs to others, and experienced 'it towards myſelf in a long ſeries of favours from 'Kings and Princes; I have held communion with 'him by many ſupernatural viſions and revelations. 'And ſhall I now be ſeparated from him by the ter-'ror of a Den of Lions? He who carried my bre-'thren thro' the fire untouched, can as eaſily deliver 'me from the rage of theſe brutes. But ſuppoſe they 'ſhould devour me, can they deſtroy and make a full 'end of me? I know that the beloved of God, tho' 'for a while they ſleep in the duſt, ſhall awake again, 'and riſe to everlaſting life: And they who are ſo 'wiſe as to glorifie God, by ſubmitting to die for 'the honour of his name, ſhall ſhine hereafter with a 'ſuperior brightneſs, as the Stars for ever and ever.

'So that whatever I loſe now for God's ſake, ſhall 'be reſtored to me above a hundred-fold in a bleſſed 'ſtation of God's heavenly Kingdom.' Such ſort of reaſoning, and much ſtronger than I can imagine, was *Daniel* maſter of, to confirm him in his religion againſt the fears of death. And thus much of his Wiſdom.

III. HE had an excellent capacity for the management of civil affairs in the higheſt ſtation of Government; which indeed was the real occaſion, and religion only the pretence, why he was called in queſtion for his life: For his ſuperior abilities ſtirred up the envy of ſuch Governors as were ſubordinate to him, to lay this plot for him, which they knew would enſnare him, becauſe they were ſure he would not deſiſt, no not for a day, from praying to his God.

TO ſee the bottom of this contrivance, we muſt look back to the foregoing Chapter. There we find *Belſhazzar* King of *Babylon* in a great conſternation at the appearance of ſome unintelligible writing, which was preſented to him in a ſupernatural way, upon a wall that was over-againſt him as he ſate at a Banquet.

THIS *Belſhazzar* is called *Nebuchadnezzar*'s Son, by a mode of ſpeech common in the Eaſtern Languages: But he was indeed his Grandſon; for the ſucceſſion of that royal Family ran thus. Next to *Nebuchadnezzar* ſucceeded his Son *Evil-merodach*, who reigned a little above two years, and then was murdered by *Nerigliſſor* his Brother-in-Law who had married his Siſter. *Nerigliſſor*, having reigned four years, fell in battel fighting for his dominions againſt *Cyrus* King of *Perſia*; and was ſucceeded by his Son *Laboroſarchod*, who in nine months time ſo provoked his people

people with his intolerable manners, that they ſlew him, and ſet up the heir of the right line, this *Belſhazzar*, who was Grandſon to *Nebuchadnezzar* by his Son *Evil-merodach* above mentioned.

BELSHAZZAR, when he had reigned about ſeventeen years, made a great entertainment for his wives, concubines, princes, and a thouſand of his great officers and noblemen. Upon which occaſion he brought out the veſſels of gold and ſilver, which his Grandfather had taken out of the Temple at *Jeruſalem*. In theſe they drank wine, and offered libations to their Idols: Which ſo highly offended God, that he ſpoiled their Banquet by a prodigy. He cauſed the fingers of a hand to appear to *Belſhazzar*, and to write upon the wall over-againſt him, two or three lines in ſuch characters as he could not underſtand.

THIS aſtoniſhed the King and his whole company, and made him cry aloud for his aſtrologers and learned men to come and read the writing. They came and viewed it, but could make nothing of it, becauſe, as 'tis reaſonably ſuppoſed, it was writ in the old *Hebrew*, now called the *Samaritan* Alphabet, which was quite different from the *Chaldee*, tho' this laſt is now the common Alphabet for the *Hebrew* tongue.

THIS difficulty encreaſed the King's diſorder; to aſſwage which Queen *Nitocris* his mother came in, and for an Interpreter recommended *Daniel* to him, whom either he could not think of for the confuſion he was in, or elſe being negligent in matters of government, knew little of him. *Daniel* came in, and after he had piouſly and affectionately rebuked the King for not learning to fear God by the judgments which he knew had befallen his Grandfather *Nebu-*

chadnezzar, he read the writing, and told the meaning of it, which was this, *That God had put an end to his reign, and given his Kingdom to the Medes and Perſians.*

FOR this ſervice *Daniel* was immediately rewarded with a ſuit of royal apparel, and proclaimed the third ruler in the Kingdom. And his interpretation was quickly verified; for in that ſame night the forces of *Cyaxares* the *Mede* and *Cyrus* the *Perſian*, which had long beſieged *Babylon*, took it by ſtratagem, and put the King and many of the inhabitants to the ſword.

THE ſtratagem was this. *Cyrus* had long tryed and found that he could make no advance by battering the walls of the city; for they were ſo high and thick, that they were one of the wonders of the World for their ſtrength. Conſidering therefore that the River *Euphrates* ran thro' *Babylon*, he contrived to divert the water of it, and to render it fordable; ſo that his ſoldiers might paſs thro' the channel of it into the city. Accordingly he cauſed ſluces and drains to be dug in the banks of it; but not to be opened till a certain night, when he was informed an anniverſary feſtival would be celebrated all over the city. This is *Belſhazzar*'s feaſt which we read of in *Daniel*. When that night came, he cauſed the ſluces to be ſuddenly opened, and by midnight the ſtream of the river was ſo ſhallow, that his men went into the channel, and thro' it into the city, which they eaſily took, the inhabitants keeping no guard, and diſabled by their feaſting and free living to make any conſiderable reſiſtance.

CYRUS, who had the Empire of *Perſia*, and other large dominions to govern, gave the Kingdom

of

of *Babylon* to *Darius* the *Mede*, whom *Xenophon* and others call *Cyaxares*. He was uncle to *Cyrus* by the mother's ſide, and his Father-in-law by marriage; for *Cyrus* married his daughter.

DARIUS was about ſixty two years old, when he began to reign in *Babylon*, and his reign there was but ſhort; ſome ſay not above two years. After his deceaſe, *Cyrus* took the government of *Babylon* upon himſelf. And ſo it fell to him to be the reſtorer of *Iſrael* from their captivity, as it had been foretold by the Prophets, and as the Records of the Sacred Hiſtory affirm.

PRESENTLY after *Darius* came to the Throne, he conſtituted a hundred and twenty Lords to be Sub-governors of his Kingdom: Over whom *he appointed three preſidents, of which Daniel was the firſt, becauſe an excellent ſpirit was found in him*, a ſpirit of wiſdom and prudence, a ſpirit of piety and zeal, a ſpirit of providence and foreſight of things to come. For theſe his great Talents and Endowments the King thought to have made him ſole Preſident over all his Kingdom. To prevent this, the other Preſidents and Sub-governors combined againſt *Daniel*, and ſought to find a flaw in the adminiſtration of his office. But finding nothing of this kind to lay to his charge, they throw a ſtumbling-block in the way of his religion, and prepare a den of Lions to receive him when he fell.

DARIUS ſigned their Decree, but he was over-reached in it. If he had ſeen their deſign, he would not have paſſed it, for he was *Daniel*'s ſincere friend. And when he heard him accuſed for the breach of this Law, he was very angry at himſelf for enacting it, and laboured with all his might to find out a way how he might

might deliver him from the penalty of it. But that being out of his power (for Kings could not diſpenſe with the Laws of the *Medes* and *Perſians)* he called him, and ſpoke comfortably to him, bidding him not doubt but that his God would deliver him. And when he was put into the den, the King faſted and prayed for him all that night; and riſing early in the morning he went to him with all ſpeed, and finding that no harm had been done to him, he congratulated him with the greateſt joy.

HIS accuſers, on the contrary, were ſorry for his eſcape. *Joſephus* writes how they alledged before the King, that the reaſon why the Lions ſpared him was, becauſe they had been well fed but juſt before. Hereupon *Darius* cauſed them to be fed with as much fleſh as they would eat in his preſence; and then commanded *Daniel*'s accuſers to be thrown in among them, to make the experiment of their own allegation, and ſee whether the Lions would touch them or not, when they were full. But the Lions fell upon the accuſers with ſuch fury, that they broke all their bones before they came to the ground.

DANIEL being thus delivered, and his adverſaries deſtroyed, the King ſaw the hand of God in this affair ſo evidently, that he wrote a Decree, and ſent it throughout his Dominions, charging all his Subjects *to fear and reverence this God, the living God, ſtedfaſt for ever and ever, whoſe Kingdom ſhall never be deſtroyed, whoſe dominion ſhall endure unto the end. He delivereth and reſcueth, he worketh ſigns and wonders in heaven and in earth.*

LET us go, and do likewiſe: Let us imitate the piety of *Daniel*, and obey this Decree of *Darius*. *Daniel*'s prayers and praiſes to God were not to be ſilenced

lenced by any threatnings. He confeſſed and magnified him in the face of thoſe men, who had paſſed a Law that he ſhould die for it. We profeſs to believe in the ſame God, and have no ſuch Law to deter us from his worſhip, but full liberty, frequent invitations, open Churches for us to come and fall down and kneel before the Lord our maker.

DANIEL gloried in God as his benefactor and protector: And will any of us diſown him in theſe capacities? There is no man who looks back upon the courſe of his life, but he muſt ſee a great many providential deliverances which have been vouchſafed him, and which would well deſerve to be called Miracles, if they were not wrought every day and hour, either for us or about us. And infinite calamities of life would be prevented, did men but recommend themſelves by regular and devout prayers to the merciful protection of Almighty God. For by their prayers they would be delivered from the Temptations of the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil; they would be reſcued, at leaſt, from the Dominion of ſuch temptations, from an habitual ſlavery to thoſe ſinful luſts and paſſions, which are ſeen every day to hurry men into the deſtruction of ſoul, body, and eſtate.

BY their prayers they might obtain thoſe graces, which, as we have heard, were eminent in *Daniel*; I mean the bleſſings of a ſound mind, piety, wiſdom, faith in God, the light of his Spirit, the pleaſures of communion with him. The Scriptures of our New Teſtament aſſure us, that we may have all theſe things for asking, if we will but ask for them, not in a ſlight, unſteady way, but with a regular devotion and conſtancy in prayer.

SURELY

SURELY it is not in vain that the Scripture ſpeaks ſo much of the graces of the Holy Spirit. Such graces are to be had, and we might wonderfully improve all the faculties of our Souls by them, if we would but heartily apply to God for them. *Daniel* and other great men obtained them, and became what they were by ſuch application.

BUT they prayed and ſang praiſes to God three times a-day; ſuch was the practice of the Church in their times. Whereas very few Chriſtians do this ſo often as three times a week; I mean in publick; and I am afraid, thoſe who neglect the publick, are far from being diligent and zealous in their private prayers.

BY ſuch neglects as theſe, men bereave themſelves of the benefit of God's favour and protection, they loſe the conſolations of his Holy Spirit, they are ſtrangers to the hopes of his heavenly Kingdom, and are deſtitute of that true faith and courage which ſhould ſupport them under all diſpenſations, and which can only be grounded on the love of God. They caſt themſelves into far worſe circumſtances than the Lions den, out of which praying *Daniel* was ſafely delivered: But they, by neglecting their prayers, ſink themſelves into the dungeon of a dark mind, which is alienated from God, and conſequently cut off from the fountain of Light; and expoſed to all the ſtorms and tempeſts of diſorderly paſſions: They are in this World as a wilderneſs, and become a prey to that ſpiritual Lion who is always ready to devour them, and are haſtening to fall and be ſwallowed up in that bottomleſs pit, from which there is no redemption.

WHAT ſhall I ſay more? The time is but ſhort, when we ſhall be at the end of our race: And when

we come there, whether our lot ſhall be happineſs or miſery, we ſhall then be convinced that every moment ſpent in ſerious prayer, is time laid out to the very beſt advantage, becauſe it brings us forward, tho' perhaps by unperceivable degrees, yet it certainly brings us forward to the attainment of that heavenly treaſure which we muſt thus labour for. Let it ſuffice that our labour ſhall not be in vain in him who hath ſaid, *Ask, and ye ſhall have; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened to you.* Let us perform the command, and we ſhall enjoy the promiſed bleſſings, thro' his goodneſs who is both able and willing to ſave us, Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, to whom, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON LXXXIX.

On the Twentieth Sunday *after* TRINITY.

MORNING.

JOEL ii. 12, 13.

Therefore alſo now, ſaith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with faſting, and with weeping, and with mourning.—And rent your Heart, and not your Garments, and turn nnto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, ſlow to Anger, and of great Kindneſs, and repenteth him of the Evil.

THIS Prophecy having no Date at the Beginning, nor Name of any reigning Prince, as others commonly have, to denote the Time when it was firſt publiſhed, we are left to gueſs when it was that the Author of it lived. St. *Jerom* thinks he was cotemporary with the preceding Prophet *Hoſea*, who propheſied in the Days of *Uzziah*, *Jotham*, *Ahaz*, and *Hezekiah*, Kings of *Judah*, and under *Jeroboam*, the ſecond of that name, King of *Iſrael*; grounding his Opinion, I ſuppoſe, on a Rule of the *Jewiſh* Doctors,

Doctors, though not always true, That when the Time of a Prophet is not expreſſed, he is to be accounted of the ſame age with the Prophet placed next before him. This is certain, that he lived between the Reign of *Jehoſhaphat* King of *Judah*, and the Deſtruction of the firſt Temple, as may be collected from Circumſtances which he mentions of them.

THE hiſtorical part of his Prophecy contains a Narrative of a very grievous Calamity, under which the Land of *Judæa* groaned at the time of his writing it. So very ſtrange and grievous, as had never been known or heard of in former times, and ſuch as their own Poſterity would be aſtoniſhed at, when they ſhould be told of it. The ſhort of the Account is this, That ſuch vaſt ſwarms of Locuſts had overſpread them, as had quite deſtroyed, not only the Fruits of the Earth, but even the very Trees and Herbs of the Field, and by that means had occaſioned a conſuming Famine and Peſtilence among the People. Theſe Locuſts the Prophet ſpeaks of in ſuch military Terms, and repreſents them like ſuch a formidable Army, that it has induced ſeveral learned Men to think, that they are put by a Figure to denote real Armies of *Egyptians*, *Aſſyrians*, *Babylonians*, or other Adverſaries of the *Jews*, who about this time, they think, invaded them, and ſpoiled their Country. But we read of no ſuch general Depredations made by any of theſe People, in thoſe Books of the Kings, which contain the Records of their military Affairs, and which could fall within that Period of Time wherein this Prophecy muſt be written: And therefore the prevailing, and I think more probable Opinion is, that we are to underſtand the Locuſt, Canker-worm, Palmer-worm, and Caterpiller, ſpoken of ch. i. ver. 4. in a literal Senſe; and that the military

military Terms which are uſed, may by the Authority of parallel Scriptures well be applied to them. This we ſhall beſt ſee in an Examination of the Particulars.

1*ſt* then, in ch. i. ver. 6. THE Prophet tells them, *That a Nation is come up upon their Land, ſtrong and without number, whoſe Teeth are the Teeth of a Lion.* Now the Word *Nation*, or *People*, though moſt fitly applied to Men, is alſo by the beſt Authors uſed ſometimes in ſpeaking of irrational Creatures; for which ſee *Prov.* xxx. 25. whence *R. David Kimchi* obſerves, that any Congregation or Multitude of living Creatures, may be ſtyled *Goi*, a *Nation*. Theſe Locuſts are here ſo named, with the Epithets of *ſtrong* and *innumerable* affixt to them. What they want in ſtrength, is made up in their multitude. The compariſon of their Teeth to thoſe of a Lion, is likewiſe uſed *Rev.* ix. 8. and ſerves to intimate what incredible Miſchief their little Teeth can do; gnawing to pieces not only green tender Things, but even the Doors of Houſes, as *Pliny* obſerves. And here the Prophet complains, that they peeled off the Barks of Trees, and ſtript the Branches of their natural Covering.

2*dly*, IT is a moſt common Practice in War, to lay Countries waſte by burning them. And of this our Prophet complains in this Calamity, ch. i. ver. 19. *That the Fire had devoured the Paſtures of the Wilderneſs, and the Flame burnt up all the Trees of the Field.* Now the forementioned *Pliny* affirms of the Locuſts, that their Touch is ſo venomous as to burn or parch things; they do not only lick up the Product of the Field before them, like that devouring Element, but like it too, they leave a horrid Brownneſs behind them. Though this may allude to a great Drought and Scarcity

Scarcity of Rain, which often accompanies the ſwarming of theſe Vermin, and of which the following Verſe is moſt naturally to be interpreted: *The Beaſts of the Field do cry*, ſays he; *for the Rivers of Water are dried up; and the fire* (or fiery heat) *hath devoured the Paſtures of the Wilderneſs.*

3*dly*, THAT Saying of this Prophet, chap. ii. ver. 4. *The appearance of them is as the appearance of Horſes, and as Horſemen ſo ſhall they run*, may well be applied to Locuſts, as it is again *Rev.* ix. 7. *Theodoret* in his Comment on this Verſe of *Joel*, ſays, that whoever ſhall accurately conſider the head of a Locuſt, will find it very much to reſemble that of a Horſe. And the *Arabians*, who are well acquainted with theſe Creatures, as being often infeſted by them, obſerve the ſame of them. And it is an Obſervation which has ſcarcely eſcaped any Naturaliſt who has wrote of them. Then in the next clauſe they are pertinently compared to Horſemen in battle, with regard to their undaunted ſpeed and boldneſs in their progreſs. And this is a convincing Argument to many, that the words are properly to be underſtood of Locuſts: for human Armies have real Horſemen, but theſe are only ſaid to be like them.

4*thly*, THE Prophet ſays, in the next verſe, *that by their leaping they ſhall make a noiſe like Chariots on the tops of mountains, like a flame of Fire in ſtubble, like a ſtrong People ſet in battel-array.* All theſe compariſons are proper to expreſs the horrid noiſe which the ſwarms of innumerable Locuſts here ſpoken of, make in their approach to any Country, and thereby ſtrike terror into the People. *Remigius* reports, from thoſe whoſe territories have been infeſted by them, that their noiſe has been heard at ſix miles diſtance. But

it may ſuffice, for illuſtrating theſe words, to add thoſe, *Rev.* ix. 9. where it is ſaid of the Locuſts there ſpoken of, *that the ſound of their Wings was like the ſound of many Chariots, of many Horſes running to battle.* The joyning of theſe two places together ſhews, that this was a proper and uſually received compariſon. And this is underſtood of the noiſe made by their leaping and flying, as that of a *flame among ſtubble* is of their chewing or eating any thing.

5thly, THE Order and Rule which they keep in their progreſs, is properly reſembled to *ſtrong People ſet in battle-array, i. e.* to well-diſciplined Soldiers, who in marching and fighting keep their Ranks and maintain their Stations. That Locuſts were of old known to do this, appears from *Prov.* xxx. 27. *The Locuſts*, ſays he, *have no King, yet they all go forth by their bands*; as in battel-array, guided by one alarm; ſo the LXX expreſs it. St. *Jerom*, *Cyril*, and *Theodoret*, who lived in the Countreys where ſwarms of theſe Creatures were often ſeen, affirm, that they keep as conſtant in their places when they fly, as the ſquare ſtones in a checquer'd Pavement, not ſuffering themſelves by any means to be put out of them. The *Arabian* Writers likewiſe obſerve, how they frame themſelves into a body, like an Army, in which while the Leader moves, the reſt all move; and when he ſettles, the reſt all ſettle together. So that they ſeem to be as obſervant of Military diſcipline as the beſt trained Soldiers; which juſtifies the compariſon here uſed of them.

THE ſame Idea and Reſemblance is continued in the three following verſes: *They ſhall run*, ſays *Joel*, *like mighty men, they ſhall climb the wall like men of war, and ſhall march every one in his way, they ſhall not break*

break their Ranks. Neither ſhall one thruſt another, they ſhall walk every one in his path; and when they fall upon the Sword, they ſhall not be wounded. They ſhall run to and fro in the City; they ſhall run upon the wall, they ſhall climb up upon the Houſes; they ſhall enter in at the windows like a Thief.

ALL this may ſerve to ſhew what I propoſed, that as the Prophet begins with complaining that the Locuſts had eaten up the Land, ſo he means them all along; and the military Phraſes which he uſes, are very applicable to them, and very proper to ſet forth their dexterity, boldneſs, and reſolution to do miſchief.

AND how great miſchief they wrought in *Judæa* at the time of this invaſion here ſpoken of, I have in ſome meaſure explained, as I went along with the deſcription of their properties: But to declare this more fully, I ſhall review two or three paſſages of the Prophet to this purpoſe.

And *1ſt*, HE complains, that the Fields, Vineyards, and Olive-yards were ſo conſumed by this Vermin, that the deſtruction was followed by a grievous Famine, which he repreſents in theſe words: *The Meat-offering and Drink-offering is cut off from the Houſe of the Lord: the Prieſts, the Lord's Miniſters, mourn.* The Corn and the Vines being deſtroyed by Worms and Locuſts, cauſed a dearth of Wheat-flower and Wine, and that ſo extreme, that there was not to be had of them enough to ſerve for the Sacrifice of Meat-offering, and Drink-offering, appointed in the Law to be offered for the ſins of the People. This was a juſt ground of general ſorrow, but more eſpecially to the Prieſts, as well for the Zeal which they might be ſuppoſed to have for the ſervice of God,

which could not regularly be performed without theſe things, as alſo that by reaſon hereof they were deprived of all the ſuſtenance which God had allotted them among the reſt of the Tribes: and ſo were doom'd to famiſh, while theſe Offerings were cut off from the Houſe of the Lord.

2*dly*, HE complains, that the Seed or Grain ſown in the ground, in hopes of a better Harveſt to repair this Deſtruction, periſhed under the clods and came to nothing, chap. i. 17. So that by reaſon of what they already ſaw and felt, and what they dreadfully apprehended farther, their Villages were become deſolate, their Granaries neglected, their Barns run to ruin, as ſeeming to be of no uſe to them, as neither having nor being likely to have any thing to put into them. The reaſon why the ſeed came to be marred, was either the great drought and want of rain, before hinted at, which ſo wither'd and ſhrunk it up, that it turned all to husk, and had no virtue or moiſture left to produce a blade; or elſe it was ſo poiſoned by the froth which the Locuſts left every where behind them, that it came to nothing.

3*dly*, HE complains that *the herds of Cattle had no paſture, that the flocks of Sheep were become deſolate, that the flame had burnt up all the trees of the field*; that the rivers and all waters were ſo dried up, that the Cattle had nothing to drink: that the Land before this vermin was like the Garden of *Eden*; but all behind them was become a deſolate Wilderneſs, and nothing had eſcaped them. That they did not only ſwarm in the Fields, but in Cities too, got over the walls, upon the tops of Houſes, and entred in at the windows: that it was in vain to oppoſe them with any weapon; *when they fall upon the Sword*, ſays he,

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they ſhall not be wounded; they are ſo light and nimble, that it cannot hurt them.

ALL theſe things laid together, ſet forth the univerſal Calamity and Deſtruction which was cauſed by the invaſion of theſe Locuſts. The Prophet repreſents it as ſo horrible, that he makes all nature to be ſhockt at it, chap. ii. ver. 10. *Before them*, ſays he, *ſhall the Earth quake, the Heavens ſhall tremble, the Sun and the Moon ſhall be dark, and the Stars ſhall withdraw their ſhining*. St. *Jerom* upon theſe words, tells us they are ſpoken by way of Hyperbole; not that there is a power in Locuſts to move the Heavens and ſhake the Earth; but that thoſe who labour under this Calamity, are ſo terrified with it, that Heaven and Earth ſeem to them to be confounded and thrown out of their places; and as for the lights of Heaven, they may well be ſuppoſed to be darkened by the ſwarms of theſe Locuſts, as it happened when they were ſent one of the Plagues of *Egypt*. As for the trembling and anxiety of the People upon this occaſion, the Prophet had before expreſt it, ver. 6. *that all Faces ſhould gather blackneſs*; words very ſignificant, as well of the inward ſadneſs of their Hearts, as of the outward melancholick face of things about them.

NOW the efficient and moving cauſe of theſe Creatures, which brought them upon the Land of *Jewry*, was the Wrath of God, who calls them his great Army, who ſent them as one of his ſore Judgments upon *Pharaoh*, as I juſt now noted; and threatned to ſend them upon his own People, in caſe they provoked him with their Sins.

AND therefore their Sins were the meritorious cauſe of this dreadful Viſitation; and the way to remove it, was to repent of them, by open Confeſſion and Ac-

knowledgment of them, by a deep Humiliation and Sorrow for them, and by utterly renouncing and forſaking them. This is the great reaſon of the Prophet's diſcourſe, and the main point which he purſues through it. To this he gives out repeated Summons, both particular and general; and very properly begins with that ſort of men, who debauching upon the plentiful increaſe of the Earth, provoke God to deſtroy it by unſeaſonable Weather and noxious Vermin. *Awake ye Drunkards*, ſays he, *and weep, and howl all ye drinkers of wine, becauſe of the new wine, for it is cut off from your mouth*, from thoſe mouths which ſo vilely abuſed it. *2dly*, To the men of Eſtates, and thoſe under them, who had the dreſſing and cultivating of the Fields and Vineyards, he tells them their waſted fields reproved their wicked lives. *Be aſhamed, O ye Husband-men; howl O ye Vine-dreſſers, for the Wheat and for the Barley, becauſe the Harveſt of the Field is periſhed.* *3dly*, He bids the Officers of Religion look at the failure of their Sacrifices, and lament their own unworthineſs, whereby they had provoked God to impoveriſh them. *Gird yourſelves and lament, ye Prieſts; howl, ye Miniſters of the Altar; come, lye all night in Sackcloth, ye Miniſters of my God; for the Meat-offering and the Drink-offering is with-holden from the houſe of your God.*

IN the next place he directs them how to practiſe their Repentance, both as to publick Expreſſion, and inward Affection. *Blow the Trumpet in Sion, ſanctifie a Faſt, call a ſolemn Aſſembly; gather the People, ſanctifie the Congregation, aſſemble the Elders, gather the Children and thoſe that ſuck the Breaſts: let the Bridegroom go forth of his Chamber, and the Bride out of her Cloſet. Let the Prieſts, the Miniſters of the Lord, weep between*

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the Porch and the Altar, and let them ſay; Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thine Heritage to reproach, that the Heathen ſhould rule over them; wherefore ſhould they ſay among the People, Where is their God? To this if we add the ſubſtance of my Text, That we ſhould turn to the Lord with all our Heart, whenever we are chaſtiſed of him, aud not put our truſt in other means for deliverance, we have then the full ſenſe and meaning of the whole Duty of Repentance; in the faithful performance whereof we may juſtly hope for a removal of the Evils we labour under. Thus the Prophet encourages the calamitous People whom he here ſpeaks to, to comfort themſelves, being penitent, with conſidering the gracious and merciful nature of God, who would meet them, returning to him, with the renewed Bleſſings of Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, and would raiſe his wind to remove far from them this Army of Locuſts into the neighbouring Seas; which is the uſual way of clearing a Country of theſe Creatures. And in the Perſon of God he promiſes them, ſaying, *I will reſtore to you the Years which the Locuſt hath eaten, the Canker-worm, and the Caterpiller, and the Palmer-worm, my great Army which I ſent among you. And ye ſhall eat in Plenty, and be ſatisfied, and praiſe the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wonderouſly with you: and my People ſhall never be aſhamed.*

NOW from what has been ſaid, we may juſtly conclude,

I. THAT they are Enemies to God and Man, who impute publick Calamities to meer Chance, or the will of the Creature; becauſe in ſo doing, they divert Men, as far as in them lies, from regarding God as the Governor of the World, and from ſeeking to appeaſe his Wrath, and remove his Judgments, by putting

away thoſe Sins which provoked him to inflict them. We ſee that all the holy Prophets interpreted unſeaſonable Weather, Blaſting, Mildew, Prevalence of Vermin, and the like, as God's Viſitation for Men's Sins, and made it an argument to call them to Repentance. And therefore they who expoſe ſuch pious regards as ſuperſtitious Conceits, as too many ſuch there are amongſt us, are enemies to God and Man, conſpiring all they can to continue the World in a ſtate of Infidelity and Miſery.

FOR, II. We learn here, that publick Judgments, ſuch as War, Peſtilence, Famine, *&c.* are to be prevented when approaching, or removed when preſent, only by a publick Repentance. This all the Prophets aſſure us, in the name of God; and God has ſo far verified their Words, that the ſucceſs has always anſwered, when the duty has been well performed. Perhaps I could not, upon ſearching, produce a ſatisfactory reaſon for it, but we know it to be true, becauſe God has declared it of himſelf, That he is pleaſed with a Solemnity in Religion, and loves to be importuned with unwearied Sollicitations, and vouchſafes thoſe Bleſſings to the united Supplications of his Church, which he will not yield to a ſingle Petitioner.

SO that we muſt ever carefully diſtinguiſh between the nature of private and publick Duties. In the one caſe, we muſt retire into our Cloſets; in the other, we muſt go forth into the Congregation. Private Mortifications we muſt conceal; publick ones we muſt own, and be as exemplary as we can in them, that we may both excite our own Zeal, and raiſe an emulation in others to do likewiſe. This is an indiſpenſable Duty in all true Members of Chriſt's myſti-

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cal Body; the Laws of Chriſtian Fellowſhip bind them to unite, and join together in the publick Worſhip of God. They who neglect to do this, contribute nothing to the ſpiritual edification and comfort of one another, and by conſequence ought not to be reputed Members of the ſame Body.

UPON the whole, we ſee the neceſſity of maintaining Communion with God, and reconciling our ſelves to him by acts of humble Devotion and Worſhip. We are taught by the Prophet, in the judgment here before us, that if we are without the verge of God's Favour and Protection, the moſt contemptible Vermin become as formidable as the ſtrongeſt Armies of Men, and eaſily triumph over us, and deſtroy us. Let us then be conſtant to the ſervice of God, and he will make all his Creatures ſubſervient to us; let us render to him the homage and honour of our Sovereign Lord, and he will give us that dominion and victory over all our Enemies, ghoſtly and bodily, which belongs to us as his Sons: he will defend us from all Adverſities which afflict the Body, and from the fiery darts of Sin and Satan which would aſſault and hurt our Souls; through the Grace, and for the Sake of his dear Son our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. To whom, *&c.*

SERMON XC.

On the Twentieth Sunday *after* TRINITY.

EVENING.

MICAH vi. 9.

The Lord's voice cryeth unto the city, and the man of wiſdom ſhall ſee thy name: Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.

FROM the beginning of this prophecy we learn, that the author of it was a native of the Kingdom of *Judah*; for *Moreſtha* or *Mareſa*, whence he is denominated a *Moraſthite*, was a Town of that Kingdom, about ſixteen miles weſtward of *Jeruſalem*. He propheſied in the days of *Jotham*, *Ahaz*, and *Hezekiah*, Kings of *Judah*, and was cotemporary with the Prophet *Iſaiah*, with whom he agrees exactly in the matter of his prophecy, in repreſenting the manners of his people, in warning them of God's viſitations which were coming upon them; and particularly that they ſhould be carried away captive to *Babylon*; which is a notable demonſtration of the truth of his prophecy: For this was one hundred and thirty years at leaſt before that captivity was accompliſhed, and above one hundred before

before any ſteps were taken towards it. And with theſe heavy tidings he intermixes many gracious promiſes of God concerning the reſtoration of the *Jews*, the calling of the *Gentiles*, and the coming of the *Meſſiah*, of whom he delivers that remarkable prediction, which we find quoted from him, *Matth.* ii. that *Bethlehem* ſhould be the place of Chriſt's Nativity.

THERE is a noble teſtimony of the Prophet *Micah* recorded *Jerem.* xxvi. which was brought in upon this occaſion. *Jeremiah* ſtanding in the court of the Lord's houſe, and loudly denouncing God's judgments upon it, in the preſence of the Prieſts, Prophets, and a very great aſſembly of People, they were ſo highly offended at him for it, that they told him, he ſhould ſurely die. The news of this diſturbance quickly reached the royal palace, and cauſed ſeveral of the Nobility and principal men to go up to the Temple. When they came there, and had heard both ſides, they reſcued *Jeremiah* from the death that was threatned him, by this argument: '*Micah* the *Moraſthite*, ſaid they, propheſied in the days of *Hezekiah* 'King of *Judah*, and ſpake to all the people, ſaying, '*Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, Sion ſhall be plowed like* '*a field, and Jeruſalem ſhall become heaps, and the moun-* '*tains of the houſe, as the high places of a foreſt.* Did '*Hezekiah* offer to put him to death for this? Did 'he not rather fear the Lord, and ſeek him upon this 'warning? So that the Lord repented him of the evil 'which he had pronounced againſt *Judah.*' The words here referred to, are *Micah* iii. 12.

BUT my Text will lead us to treat of many more paſſages of this Prophet, which will abundantly prove that he was inſpired by the ſame Spirit which ſpoke by

Iſaiah

Iſaiah and *Jeremiah*, and the reſt of God's meſſengers, ſent upon the like errand to his people.

THE Lord's voice, ſays he, *cryeth unto the city*, or rather, unto the cities; for *Micah* tells us his viſion concerned both *Samaria* and *Jeruſalem*. Againſt theſe there is a cry both of ſins and of puniſhments. *Firſt* of ſins. The ground and reaſon of God's viſitation is laid down in general, thus. *For the tranſgreſſion of Jacob is all this, and for the ſins of the houſe of Iſrael: what is the tranſgreſſion of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jeruſalem?* The meaning is this, that theſe great Cities, *Samaria* and *Jeruſalem*, had corrupted the two Kingdoms of which they were the reſpective heads, *Samaria* of *Iſrael*, *Jeruſalem* of *Judah*. And this, I believe, is the caſe of moſt Kingdoms, that they are much influenced by the ſpirit and genius of their head Cities. For there is the general reſidence of the King, his Courtiers, his Senate and great Officers. There are commonly to be found the great oracles of Religion and the Laws. There the Temples and Churches and Schools of education are generally more numerous than in other places. On the other hand, atheiſm and immorality, when they meet with a ſuperior patronage, are no where ſo predominant as in great Cities: Becauſe there are the greateſt riches, the greateſt concourſe of all ſorts of people, the moſt houſes of entertainment, and places convenient for ſenſual pleaſures and vitious diverſions.

AND there are ſeveral ways of propagating the manners of ſuch a Metropolis, whether good or evil, to all its inferior Cities and Towns; partly by the multitude of people who are always coming and going; partly by common fame; and very much by ſuch letters

letters and books as are iſſued out from ſuch a City: For theſe declare very fully and pathetically the prevailing ſentiments of the head to all the members. So that if the Metropolis be a harlot, an enemy of God, a ſink of iniquity, ſhe quickly proclaims her blaſphemies and corruptions, not only over her own, but over many of her neighbouring Kingdoms; and becomes the common parent of innumerable ſons and daughters of impiety.

SUCH kind of parents were *Samaria* and *Jeruſalem*. They were two fountains of corruption which infected all the Countries round about them. The tranſgreſſion of *Samaria* were *Baal* and the golden Calves; the tranſgreſſion of *Jeruſalem* were her high places, where idolatries were practiſed. Thus the Prophet lays his general charge; he will come to particulars preſently. But he begins with religious abuſes, becauſe they are the ſpring and root of all other wickedneſs.

WHEN we hear the charge of idolatry, we muſt not think that theſe Cities filled themſelves with Idols, only for the ſake of ſo many images, altars, ſacrifices, and other ſuperſtitious ceremonies. This had been to encreaſe the trouble and expences of Religion, which they had no delight in. But their idolatrous worſhip conſiſted much in the gratification of their carnal luſts and paſſions. Their groves and high places were a kind of *Maſquerades*, where they wallowed in ſenſualities. Their Idols were the patrons of their profligate living, as *Bacchus*, *Venus*, and *Mercury* were of intemperance, uncleanneſs, lying, ſtealing, and fraudulent dealings among the *Greeks* and *Romans*. They were the ſame of old in the eaſtern Countries, only under different names. And they had the ſame influence

fluence upon their worſhippers, as we ſhall hear preſently. I obſerve now, that the Prophet takes a good method in his reproofs, to begin with theſe Cities, as being the heads and leaders of their reſpective Kingdoms; and with the ſtate of Religion in them, as having the greateſt influence upon the manners of the people. *The Lord's voice cryeth againſt the city's idolatry.*

Secondly, HIS voice cries againſt their violence and oppreſſion. 'Wo unto them that deviſe iniquity upon their beds: When the morning is light, they put it in practice. They covet fields, and take them by violence; and houſes, and take them away; ſo they oppreſs a man and his houſe, even a man and his heritage. Even of late, my people is riſen up as an enemy: Ye pull off the robe with the garment, from them that paſs by ſecurely, as men averſe from war.' This puts me in mind of ſome paſſages in the *Roman* Hiſtory, which aſſure us, that under the reigns of their tyrannical Emperors, eſpecially under *Commodus*, who was a ſecond *Nero*, many men were put to death for no other reaſon, but becauſe they had great eſtates, which, upon their being executed, eſcheated to the Emperor's treaſury. And *Herodian* writes, that when the ſaid *Commodus* was dead, and was ſucceeded by *Pertinax*, a man endued with all the virtues which the other wanted, by which he endeared himſelf to his people, and grew formidable to his enemies; as ſoon as he commanded the ſoldiers which were his ſtanding forces, *not to offer any rudeneſs to the people, nor to affront any perſon that paſſed by*, they conſpired againſt him and killed him in a mutiny, before he had reigned three months, being impatient for a return of the ſame tyranny which they had exerciſed under

under *Commodus*, when they debauched, and committed what ſpoil and violence they pleaſed without controul.

SUCH executions of rich men for their eſtates, and ſuch military outrages, we often meet with in the *Turkiſh* Hiſtory. And it ſeems they prevailed of old in the *Jewiſh* Government. For this muſt be *Micah*'s meaning, when he ſays, 'they oppreſs a man and his 'family for the ſake of his fields and houſes; they 'pull off the garments of paſſengers who are unarm-'ed, and not prepared for war.'

THE Prophet proceeds with his charge of violent dealing: *The women of my people have ye caſt out from their pleaſant houſes; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever.* When theſe oppreſſors had cut off the maſter of a family, they turned his helpleſs widow and children out of doors, and reduced them to ſuch a ſtate of beggary and ſlavery, that they were deprived of all good education; and the honour of being God's children, and members of his Church, appeared in them no more. Their oppreſſors were the murderers both of their bodies and ſouls.

ANOTHER branch of oppreſſion he charges upon their Governors, chap. iii. and that is, their cruel exactions of duties from the people in their trades and their labours, ſo that they had made it impoſſible for them to live with any comfort. *Hear*, ſays he, *ye heads of Jacob, and princes of Iſrael: is it not for you to know judgment?* Men of their birth and ſtation were more eſpecially bound to know and practiſe the Law of God, which injoined them to treat the inferior people as their brethren, to ſeek their welfare, to give them the fruits of their labours, to render to every man his due, a living price for his goods, and juſt wages for his

his work. *But you*, ſays he, *are a ſet of men who hate the good, and love the evil, who pluck off the skin, and tear the fleſh from the bone. Ye eat the fleſh of my people, ye flay their skin from off them; ye break their bones and chop them in pieces as for the pot, as fleſh for the caldron.* What words can more exquiſitely ſet forth a killing oppreſſion? He ſpeaks in alluſion to a ſhepherd and his flock. 'Ye are not content, ſays he, with 'the fleece and the milk, but ye devour the whole, 'the skin, the fleſh and the bones, by your grievous 'impoſitions which you lay upon the poor people, 'and which you conſume in the pampering of your 'own pride, luxury, and vanity.' Thus *the Lord's voice cries againſt the oppreſſion of the city.*

Thirdly, HE cries againſt their bribery and corruption. *Hear again, I pray you, ye heads of Jacob, and princes of Iſrael, who abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. They build up Sion with blood, and Jeruſalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the prieſts teach for hire, and the prophets divine for money.* We ſee the love of money ſwayed and governed all the governing men both in Church and State. And when that was the ſpring of all buſineſs, how wretched muſt be the adminiſtration? Who could expect good Laws from ſuch corrupt Legiſlators? Or a fair execution of thoſe that were good, from ſuch Judges? Or to hear the genuine word of God from Prophets and Prieſts who ſought money above all things? That this is their true character, is confirmed by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, who, as I noted before, lived in the ſame generation, chap. i. *How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment, righteouſneſs lodged in it, but now murderers. Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after*

after rewards: they judge not the fatherleſs, neither doth the cauſe of the widow come before them. And why not? but becauſe they had no money to carry on their ſuit; which was therefore either wholly neglected, or if it was brought into court, it was eaſily run down by a rich adverſary, who had money enough to fee and bribe and make friends againſt them. This is the reaſon why *Micah* complains *that Sion was built with blood, and Jeruſalem with iniquity*, becauſe their Princes by oppreſſion, their Judges by bribes, their Prophets and Prieſts for rewards, and all to raiſe fine houſes, and purchaſe large eſtates, deſtroyed the eſtates, and bodies and ſouls of the people. Thus *the Lord cries againſt the city for their bribery, and corruption* of all Laws ſacred and civil.

Fourthly, HE cries againſt the city for her witchcrafts and ſoothſayers, chap. v. 12. No Nation was ever more addicted to the ſeveral ſorts of divination than the *Jews*, both of ancient and modern times. We find a great many remarks and complaints of this kind in the writings of the Prophets. This is certainly one reaſon why the *Jews* were ſo fond of Idols, becauſe by the help of evil ſpirits who ſpoke thro' them, they exerciſed ſorceries and ſoothſaying. Which they practiſed however, long after they were weaned from their Idols. Thus we read *Acts* xix. that when certain vagabond *Jews*, who were exorciſts, or conjurers, took upon them to caſt out evil ſpirits for money, by invocating the name of our bleſſed Lord, the demoniack fell upon them, and wounded them, and put them to flight: Which ſo affected many more who uſed the like unlawful arts, that they embraced Chriſtianity, and brought their magical Books

together, and burnt them in a heap, to the value of fifty thouſand pieces of ſilver.

THEIR Talmud, which was written long ſince the beginnings of Chriſtianity, takes notice that they commonly uſed amulets and charms againſt diſeaſes and accidents; that moſt of the women in *Iſrael* were guilty of ſorceries; that eighty of them were executed at *Aſcalon* in one day for thoſe crimes; and one of their *Rabbies* writes, that there was a chamber in the very Temple, built by a Magician; which, whether true or falſe, ſhews their own opinion of the prevalence of magick in ſeveral ages among them.

NOW let us hear what the Lord ſays of ſuch practices, by the cotemporary Prophet, *Iſaiah* viii. 19. *When*, ſays he, *they ſhall ſay unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar ſpirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter; ſhould not a people ſeek unto their God?* What a lamentable ſtate was this, that under ſuch a Law, ſuch a Covenant, when there was ſo much light of God's word, and ſuch Prophets as *Iſaiah* and *Micah*, yet theſe inſtruments of *Satan* ſhould be ſo numerous, and the people ſhould ſo commonly have recourſe to them, as from this Text we may juſtly conclude? For this reaſon, as I take it, is *Micah*'s *memento* a little before my Text. *Remember, O my people, what Balak king of Moab conſulted, and what Balaam the ſon of Beor anſwered him: that ye may know the righteouſneſs of the Lord.* Remember what miſchiefs theſe powers of hell have meditated againſt you, and how gracious God has been in reſtraining them; and be more juſt to your ſelves and to your God, than to ſeek unto them in any difficulty. Thus *the Lord's voice cryeth againſt witchcrafts.*

Fifthly,

Fifthly, HE cries out againſt frauds in commerce and dealing. To prevent which God had enacted very ſtrict Laws. *Levit.* xix. 35, 36. 'Ye ſhall do 'no unrighteouſneſs in judgment, in mete-yard, in 'weight or in meaſure. Juſt balances, juſt weights, 'a juſt ephah, and a juſt hin ſhall ye have. *Deut.* xxv. '13, *&c.* Thou ſhalt not have in thy bag divers 'weights, a great and a ſmall. Thou ſhalt not have 'in thine houſe divers meaſures, a great and a ſmall. 'But thou ſhalt have a perfect and juſt weight, a 'perfect and juſt meaſure: That thy days may be 'lengthened in the Land which the Lord thy God 'giveth thee. For all that do ſuch things, and all 'that do unrighteouſly, are an abomination unto the 'Lord thy God.'

THIS iniquity in buying and ſelling was much ſpoken againſt by the royal Preacher, and other wiſe men and Prophets. 'And are there yet, ſays God 'here by the Prophet *Micah*, after all my Laws and 'threatnings to make you true and juſt in your deal-'ings, are there yet the treaſures of wickedneſs in 'the houſe of the wicked, and the ſcant meaſure that 'is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the 'wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful 'weights?' This was one of the abominations which defiled their Land, and caſt them out of it.

Laſtly, HE cryeth out againſt the treachery of friends, and the want of mutual affection in the neareſt relations. 'Truſt ye not in a friend, put no confi-'dence in a guide: Keep the doors of thy mouth 'from her that lieth in thy boſom. For the ſon diſ-'honoureth the father: the daughter riſeth up againſt 'her mother: the daughter-in-law againſt her mo-

'ther-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his 'own houſe.'

SUCH were the *Jews* when they were drawn down to the dregs, a little before they were carried to *Babylon*; and ſuch they were again at the time of their laſt captivity, when they became a prey to the *Romans*, as we learn from our Lord, who applies this laſt verſe to them, *Matth.* x.

HITHERTO we have heard the voice of the Lord crying againſt the ſins of his people: Now let us hear the ſame voice declaring what judgments were coming upon them for the puniſhment of ſuch ſins, as they are ſet forth in this prophecy of *Micah*.

THE firſt woe denounced, is the ruin of *Samaria*. *I will*, ſays he, *make Samaria as an heap of the field, as plantings of a vineyard; and I will pour down the ſtones thereof into the valley, and I will diſcover the foundations thereof.* The like doom and ſentence is paſſed upon *Jeruſalem*, that it ſhould be plowed as a field, and turned into a foreſt, as was mentioned before.

ALL the hires thereof ſhall be burnt with fire: which ſhall deſtroy theſe cities, and conſume all their wealth and ſubſtance. *For they gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and unto a harlot's hire it ſhall return.* They imagined that they gained their wealth by the power and bleſſing of their ſtrange Gods, as the reward of their idolatry; and it ſhall return and become a prey to the idolatrous *Aſſyrians* and *Babylonians*.

THE ſecond woe denounced is captivity. 'Be-'cauſe, ſays God to the oppreſſors before mentioned, 'ye have deviſed iniquity againſt your poor brethren 'to diſpoſſeſs them of their means and eſtates, I will 'deviſe evil againſt you; a yoke from which you ſhall 'not

'not free your necks. *Jeruſalem* ſhall lament with a 'doleful lamentation, and ſay; We are utterly ſpoiled: 'he hath changed the portion of my people: how 'hath he removed it from me? turning away he hath 'divided our fields. He hath removed his people out 'of their ancient inheritance, which he divided to 'them at firſt by lot, and hath given it to other 'Lords to inherit, who ſhall not caſt lots for it, but 'take it by force: Ariſe, and depart hence, for this 'is not your reſt. Becauſe ye have polluted the land, 'it ſhall ſpue you out, as it did its former inhabi-'tants the *Canaanites*. Be in pain, and labour to bring 'forth, oh daughter of *Sion*, like a woman in travel: 'for now ſhalt thou go forth out of the city, and 'thou ſhalt dwell in the field, and thou ſhalt go even 'to *Babylon*; there ſhalt thou be delivered.'

THE third woe is the failure of the true Prophecy and Miniſtry of God's word among them. *Propheſy ye not, ſay they to them that propheſy.* They did not care to hear unpleaſant truths. 'Therefore my 'Prophets ſhall propheſy no more to them; for they 'will not take ſhame to themſelves; they ſtill perſiſt 'in their wicked ways. O thou that art named of 'the houſe of *Jacob*, but doeſt things unworthy of 'that name! Is the Spirit of the Lord ſtraitned? are 'theſe his doings? or has not rather his Spirit abound-'ed to you, and ſtrove with you thus far to no pur-'poſe? Therefore night ſhall come upon you, that ye 'ſhall have no viſion, and darkneſs that ye ſhall not 'divine. The ſun ſhall go down upon the Prophets, 'and the day ſhall be dark over them. They ſhall 'cover their lips, as men uſed to do under any great 'affliction, becauſe there is no anſwer, no revelation 'from God.'

THE fourth woe is a pining waſting ſickneſs which ſhould ſeize upon them. 'I will, ſays God, 'make thee ſick in ſmiting thee; I will make thee 'deſolate, becauſe of thy ſins. I will afflict thee with 'an incurable diſeaſe which ſhall gradually waſte thy 'ſtrength; with a conſumption that ſhall prey up-'on thy vitals.'

THE fifth woe threatned to theſe ſinners, is famine. 'Thou ſhalt eat, but not be ſatisfied, by rea-'ſon either of the ſcantineſs of food, or the want of 'a nouriſhing virtue in it. Thou ſhalt take hold, 'but ſhalt not deliver. Whatever advantage thou 'ſhalt make by thy induſtry, thou ſhalt not be able 'to keep it, but it ſhall become a prey to thine ene-'mies. Thou ſhalt ſow, but thou ſhalt not reap: 'thou ſhalt tread the olives, but ſhalt not anoint 'thee with oil; and ſweet wine, but ſhalt not drink 'wine. For in all theſe reſpects thou ſhalt drudge as 'a ſlave under the *Babylonians*, and they ſhall reap 'the fruit of thy labours.'

LASTLY, The ſixth woe which is heaped upon them, is the ſcorn and contempt wherewith their enemies ſhould treat them. 'I will, ſays he, make 'you a hiſſing; and ye ſhall bear the reproach of my 'people.' The Prophet directs his diſcourſe to the great and rich men, and tells them, that ſince they, who ſhould have been the pillars and defenders of Religion, have by their atheiſm given encouragement to Infidels to blaſpheme God and trample upon his Church, therefore they ſhould be objects of deriſion to their enemies, who ſhould continually inſult and lord it over them.

AND thus we have heard the Lord's voice crying againſt the cities of *Samaria* and *Jeruſalem*, arraigning

raigning them of their ſins, and denouncing their puniſhments, as they are ſet forth by the Prophet *Micah*.

IN theſe charges and denunciations *the man of wiſdom will ſee God's name*, i. e. acknowledge his commiſſion and authority in them as fully, as if he had ſeen him write them. They are all ſo conſiſtent with his nature and attributes of Holineſs, Juſtice and Truth, with the character which he has given of himſelf throughout his own word, with the covenant which he made with his people, and the conditions of his mercies and judgments, as they are recorded in many parts of Scripture, particularly *Levit.* xxvi. and *Deut.* xxviii. He that is not an infant or a child, but a man of wiſdom, who has duly read the holy Scripture, and obſerved the providence of God, how he has made his word the rule of his former diſpenſations: He that conſiders the ſins here complained of, and compares this prophecy of *Micah* with the Law and the Prophets, eſpecially with the words of the cotemporary Prophet *Iſaiah*, when he ſees the exact agreement between them, he will receive this Prophecy as a meſſage from the ſame God, as inſpired by the ſame holy Spirit. The man of wiſdom will ſee the name, and hear the voice of God in all this; and confeſs, when the judgments are inflicted, that they are not fortuitous, coming in the ordinary courſe of things, or owing to the meer will of man, or concurrence of ſecond cauſes; but that they are a rod from Heaven, which God hath appointed for the puniſhment of his ſinful people.

THERE were indeed many cheats and impoſtors in thoſe times, who counterfeited this great name of God, and pretended his commiſſion, when he had not ſent them. But a wiſe man might eaſily ſee the

vanity of their pretenſions by their conduct and deportment. For they made it their buſineſs to pleaſe their hearers, that they might be applauded and well rewarded by them. They were a ſort of free-livers, who propheſied both *of and for wine and ſtrong drink*; liberally diſpenſing their bleſſings for plenty, and making as free a uſe of it. One might eaſily perceive that they had no deſign to ſerve God, but their own bellies, and by good words and fair ſpeeches to deceive thoſe who were willing to be deceived. As for the wiſe man, he was in no danger of being miſ-led by them.

BUT alas! how few ſuch wiſe men are any where to be found? Our Prophet compares them to the gleaning after harveſt or vintage; ſcarce two or three to be diſcovered by the moſt diligent ſearch. *The beſt of our people*, ſays he, *is as a briar*; *the moſt upright is ſharper than a thorn-hedge*; *i. e.* both unfruitful and untractable: deaf to the denunciations of God's judgments, and blind to the actual execution of them. When his hand was ſtretched out to puniſh them, they would not acknowledge it, but ſtill leaned upon him, ſays *Micah*, and imputed his viſitations to meer fortune and chance.

THIS is an atheiſtical infatuation which has always prevailed in the world, and done infinite miſchief in it; that tho' men know their doings to be ſuch as have rendered them obnoxious to the judgments of God, and have felt the correction of his rod in croſſes and calamities which have befallen them; yet they are not thereby led to repentance, but go on ſecurely in their old ways, and flatter themſelves that God has no controverſy with them, till they are ſwallowed up in utter deſtruction.

BUT

BUT the voice of wiſdom teaches another leſſon, and all wiſe men will practiſe it, as we have heard from our Prophet in the words of my Text. I will conclude with like words of another Prophet, I mean *Hoſea*, who propheſied at the ſame time in the Kingdom of *Iſrael*, and cloſes his Book with theſe words: *Who is wiſe, and he ſhall underſtand theſe things? prudent, and he ſhall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the juſt ſhall walk in them: but the tranſgreſſors ſhall fall therein.* May he inſpire us with that Spirit of wiſdom which may prevent our fall, and ſecure to us his ſaving health and protection, thro' the merits of *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, to whom, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON XCI.

On the Twenty-firſt Sunday *after* TRINITY.

MORNING.

HABAKKUK ii. 4.

Behold, his Soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him: but the Juſt ſhall live by his Faith.

THOUGH the time of this Prophecy is not notified to us by the mention of any King's Reign, yet we may certainly conclude, from ſeveral paſſages in it, that the Author lived in the days of ſome of the later Kings of *Judah*, perhaps under *Manaſſeh* the Son of *Hezekiah*, as ſome Interpreters conjecture from his crying out and complaining of Violence, Injuſtice, and grievous Oppreſſions which he ſaw with his own Eyes, and which abounded in a flagrant manner, under the Government of that wicked King. Though others place him as low as *Zedekiah*.

THE main ſubject of his Prophecy is this. After he has ſet forth the deplorable ſtate of his Nation, by reaſon of their incorrigible Sins, he proceeds to denounce the Sword of God's Judgments which was unſheathing againſt them, and points out the quarter from

from whence it appeared. *I will*, ſays he, *raiſe the Chaldeans, that bitter and haſty Nation, which ſhall ſpread themſelves all over your Land, flying like Eagles, and ravening like evening Wolves; Men who know no Law but their own Will, who ſhall deſtroy your Fruits like a blaſting Wind, and gather Captives like the Sand upon the Sea-ſhore; they ſhall have your Princes in deriſion, and eaſily leap over thoſe Walls of your Fortreſſes, which you think are impregnable.*

HABAKKUK having had this Revelation from God, That the *Chaldeans* ſhould be the Miniſters of his Vengeance againſt ſinful *Judah*, falls into an holy Expoſtulation with him about theſe Diſpenſations. 'O 'everlaſting God, ſays he, whoſe Word is unchange-'able as thy ſelf; thou haſt given out many Oracles 'by thy Prophets of old, which are not yet fulfilled 'amongſt us; and canſt thou conſume us, that we 'ſhould be no more a People, before they are accom-'pliſhed? Thou that art of purer Eyes than to behold 'Iniquity in thine own choſen People, why haſt thou 'ordained theſe *Chaldeans* for their Judges, a faithleſs 'Race of Men, who without ſcruple devour thoſe 'that are more righteous than themſelves, and prey 'upon them as freely as the Fiſherman, who takes all 'that comes to his Net; and after all the Victories 'which thou giveſt them, they have no Notion of 'thy Providence, but impute their Succeſs to the 'Power and Wiſdom of their own falſe Gods.

NOW to this Expoſtulation, which cloſes the firſt Chapter, the Prophet tells us here in the ſecond, that he waited moſt attentively for the Anſwer of God, and received it, with a Command to write it upon Tables ſo plain, *that he may run that reads it*, or may eaſily run it over, without Heſitation, it being ſo le-

gible.

gible. And the Subſtance of the Divine Anſwer is this: That the *Chaldeans* were indeed ſuch Men as the Prophet had repreſented them; and that therefore when God had uſed them as Rods for the Chaſtiſement of his People, he would throw them into the Fire, and utterly conſume them. This Burden of the *Babylonian* begins at the fifth Verſe of this Chapter, *Becauſe he tranſgreſſeth by Wine, and is proud*; the Pride of *Nebuchadnezzar*, and the Drunkenneſs of his Grandſon *Belſhazzar*, are mentioned in ſacred Writ as Occaſions of their great Calamities. The firſt was turned into a Beaſt for glorying in his mighty *Babylon*, as the Monument of his immenſe Riches and Power. The other was delivered into the Hands of the *Medes* and *Perſians*, in a Night of idolatrous Revels, when he was celebrating the Feſtival of his falſe Gods, and prophaning the ſacred Veſſels of *Solomon*'s Temple, with exceſſive drinking. The low and ſhameful Condition into which this Monarch ſhould ſink, is deſcribed in our Prophet by the Remarks which his conquered and captive Nations ſhould make upon him, taking up a taunting Proverb againſt him, and ſaying, *Wo to him that encreaſeth that which is not his, that ladeth himſelf with thick Clay; that buildeth a Town with Blood, and eſtabliſheth a City by Iniquity. Wo to him that giveth his Neighbour drink, preſſing his Bottle upon him 'till he is drunken. Wo to him that ſaith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb ſtone, Ariſe; invocating that which hath no Breath, nor Power to help it ſelf.*—— Theſe are the Denunciations of God's Judgments upon *Babylon*, for her Pride and Cruelty, her Luxury and Idolatry. And this is an Anſwer to that part of *Habakkuk*'s Expoſtulation, why God puniſhed *Iſrael* by the Sword of the *Chaldeans*: It was not that he exalted

exalted that People for any ſuperior Worth in them; for on the contrary they were now almoſt ripe for Deſtruction, and ſhould ſurvive their Triumphs over the *Jews* but a very ſhort time. *For*, ſays he, *it is of the Lord of Hoſts that the People ſhall labour in the very Fire*, or rather ſhall labour for that which ſhall be fewel for the Fire, *and weary themſelves for very Vanity*; meaning that all the Pains the *Chaldeans* took in enlarging and beautifying their famous *Babylon*, ſhould be ſoon loſt in the Flames which ſhould conſume it, even as they had conſumed the Cities of *Judæa*.

TO the other Part of the Prophet's Enquiry, How God would fulfill thoſe Promiſes to his People, which were not yet accompliſhed, if he now gave them over into Captivity; the Anſwer is, That Viſion or Prophecy hath its determinate and appointed Time, and though the Accompliſhment of it may ſeem tedious, yet in the end it will ſpeak and not lye; or it will break forth at laſt like the dawning Day after a Night of Darkneſs, and no more fail Men, than the Sun in running his Courſe: *Therefore though it tarry, wait for it; becauſe it will ſurely come at laſt, and will not tarry* beyond God's appointed time. And then follow the Words of my Text; *Behold, his Soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him; but the Juſt ſhall live by his Faith.*

IN which Words there is a good deal of Obſcurity; it not being plain what they refer to, nor whether we ſhould connect them with the foregoing or following Paſſages. As they ſtand in our preſent Tranſlation, they fall in moſt naturally with what follows, and muſt be interpreted of the proud *Babylonian*, who being exalted with his Victories, Wealth, and large Empire, and imagining that no God was able to deliver

ver People out of his Hand, had certainly a Heart much too big for a Man; or rather a Bubble puſt up with vain Conceit, which quickly burſt into Air, and came to nothing. Whereas many of his moſt abject, impotent Captives, who had Faith enough to believe that God doth whatſoever pleaſeth him in the Armies of Heaven, and the Kingdoms of Men, ſetting up one, and pulling down another; and in conſequence of this Faith humbled themſelves before him, and importuned him with their Supplications to be merciful unto them, to commiſerate their afflicted Condition, and to deliver them out of it; and ſeriouſly repented of their Sins, to make way for ſuch Deliverance; ſuch pious Captives, I ſay, in reward of their Faith, ſurvived their Oppreſſor, and were finally reſtored to their own Country.

THIS is a good Senſe in which my Text may be interpreted; for it is very true in all its Circumſtances; and juſtly coheres with the next verſe, making part of the Character of the *Babylonian* Monarch, and intimating that his Captives were happier than he.

THERE is an antient *Jewiſh* Interpreter, who expounds this Verſe with reference to *Zedekias* and *Jechonias*, two of the laſt Kings of *Judah*; and his Comment is this; That *Zedekias* his Soul was ſo lifted up in him, as to cauſe him to rebel againſt the King of *Babylon*, contrary to the Oath of Fealty which he had ſworn, and the Divine Admonitions given him by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, and therefore he periſhed in his Rebellion: whereas *Jechonias*, hearkening to the Word of the Prophet, and ſubmitting himſelf to *Nebuchadnezzar*, when he made War upon him, obtained his Life and Liberty, as the Reward of his Obedience and Truſt in God. But this is not ſtrictly true:

true: For *Jehoiachin*, alias *Jeconiah*, who was *Zedekiah*'s Predeceſſor, was a very wicked King, as we learn from the Hiſtory of the Kings, and from *Jer.* xxii. and by him God was provoked to ſend an Army of *Chaldeans* to beſiege *Jeruſalem*, who took him Priſoner in the eighth year of his Reign, and put him in Chains, and carried him to *Babylon*, and there confined him thirty ſeven Years, 'till the death of *Nebuchadnezzar*; whoſe Son and Succeſſor *Merodach* was more favourable indeed to this *Jeconiah*, releaſing him out of Priſon, and admitting him to eat at the royal Table; but this did not laſt long, and he ended his Days in Captivity.

SO that his Character will not ſuit with that part of my Text which ſays, *the Juſt ſhall live by his Faith.* And if it did, yet no good Reaſon can be given, why this ſingle Verſe ſhould be interpreted of *Zedekiah* and *Jeconiah*, who are not pretended to be hinted at in any other part of this Prophecy.

I proceed therefore to a third Expoſition of theſe Words, very different from the two former, but ſuch as is warranted by the Seventy *Greek* Interpreters, who render the words to this Senſe: *If any Man draw back, my Soul ſhall have no Pleaſure in him: but the Juſt ſhall live by Faith.* Here we ſee the former part of the Verſe differs very much from that which we find in our *Engliſh* Bibles: yet, ſo various is the Signification of the ſame *Hebrew* Words, that we may allow our Tranſlators to have been faithful, and yet accept of this laſt Senſe, as ſound and good. Indeed ſome of the moſt learned and judicious of our Moderns have proved, that it is conſonant to the original *Hebrew*, and it has this great Advantage above the other, that it is followed by St. *Paul*, *Heb.* x. 38.

NOW

NOW the Words thus interpreted, muſt be connected with the foregoing Verſe; together with which they make this Senſe: That whereas *Habakkuk* had demanded of God, How he would make good thoſe Promiſes to his People, which were not yet fulfilled, if he was determined to ſend them into Captivity; the Divine Anſwer is this: That God has the Times and Seaſons in his own hands, when he will fulfill all his Words, none of which can fail or be falſified: that it is our Duty to rely upon his Veracity, and to live in the firm Perſuaſion of the Truth of his Promiſes: That if any of us withdraw our Obedience, and reject any Article of his Word, becauſe it is not yet accompliſhed, we ſhall fall under his heavy Diſpleaſure, and incur the Pains of Apoſtates and Infidels; but that *he who endureth unto the End, ſhall be ſaved.* He that believeth God's Word ſo, as to walk worthy of the great Things which he has promiſed to do for him, ſhall have his Faith crowned with a happy Accompliſhment.

THIS is a very pious Senſe, and worthy of the Oracles of God. But it is ſtill fuller, if we render part of the third Verſe according to the Verſion of the LXX, and the quotation of St. *Paul*; *though he tarry, wait for him*; *for he that cometh, will come, and will not tarry* beyond his appointed time; and with the Apoſtle underſtand them of the Meſſiah, who is often ſtyled, *He that cometh, or ſhould come into the World.* So we hear the *Jews* enquiring of *John* the *Baptiſt*, *Matt.* xi. *Art thou he that ſhould come, or muſt we look for another?* So they ſung *Hoſannah to him that cometh in the Name of the Lord*, Matt. xxi.

FROM the Words thus explained, we may raiſe ſeveral uſeful Obſervations.

1*ſt*,

1*ſt*, WE ſee the Method which God has taken in revealing to us Things to come. He has thought it ſufficient to reveal to us the Things themſelves, without notifying the Time, generally ſpeaking, when they ſhall be performed and manifeſted in the World. I ſay, generally ſpeaking: For the Time of the accompliſhment of ſome Predictions was notified at the Delivery of them. Thus God told *Noah*, that he would bear with the Manners of the old World one hundred and twenty Years longer. Thus he acquainted *Abraham* that his Seed ſhould ſojourn in a ſtrange Land, and be oppreſſed with Servitude four hundred Years. And this Generation to whom *Habakkuk* propheſied, had Notice from him, and *Jeremiah*, and *Ezekiel*, that *Nebuchadnezzar*, then reigning in *Babylon*, ſhould carry them into Captivity, and that ſome of them who were faithful and believed in God, ſhould live to ſee an End of it. But then there were other Prophecies which were ſealed up as to the Time of their Accompliſhment, particularly thoſe relating to the Meſſiah, to the ſecond Captivity and Diſperſion of the *Jews*, and to ſeveral Things which are not yet come to paſs in the World.

2*dly*, WE ſee the great Sin of Infidelity, and how much of the Divine Diſpleaſure we incur, when we disbelieve any Word of God, only becauſe the Completion of it falls not within the Time which we had reckoned upon for the doing of it. Why ſhould the Wit of Man undertake to diſcover that which the Wiſdom of God has thought fit to conceal? Or why ſhould we think it would have been for our Advantage, to have known more of future Occurrences, and the Time of their Events, than we do know? Since

we find in ſacred Writ, that when the Time of People's Viſitation has been preſignified to them, they have been never the better for the Foreknowledge of it. Neither the old World nor *Sodom* were the better for being told, by *Noah* and *Lot*, that the threatned Judgments would fall upon thoſe Men to whom they were denounced. But they were the ſame Men, and their Ways and Manners the ſame to the laſt, *becauſe they would not believe the time of their Viſitation.*

AND though God viſited his People, and redeemed them out of *Egypt* according to the Time which he had preſignified to their Fathers, yet how unprepared were they to believe *Moſes* and *Aaron*, even when they confirmed their Miſſion by working Miracles before their Eyes? And when they were reſcued into Liberty by the manifeſt Hand of God, yet they would not truſt him for the Accompliſhment of his Promiſe, but their Infidelity was ſuch as hindered them from entring into the land of *Canaan*. So little will it avail us to know the moſt punctual Times of Events, if we have not a Heart to believe every Word of God.

3dly, WE hear the Bleſſing which accompanies our ſincere Belief and dutiful Obſervance of God's Word; *The Juſt ſhall live by his Faith*. So *Noah* and *Lot* eſcaped the Deſtruction which conſumed all the People round about them, becauſe they believed the Warnings of God, and fled from it in the Way which he ſhewed them. So in the Wars and Invaſions of *Judæa* by the *Chaldeans*, thoſe that hearkened to the Prophets of God, and followed their Directions, had their Life for a Portion. The Pſalms and the Prophets abound with Acknowledgments of this kind,

that

that *Salvation is of the Lord.* They are the Confeſſions of holy Men, who by daily Experience had tried the Word of God, and found that it always brought their Affairs to a happy Iſſue, aud upon that account recommend it to all others, as a means of Succeſs and Safety, which will never fail them.

BUT this is much more clearly, and without any ſhadow of contradiction true, in reference to ſpiritual Things and a future State, that *the Juſt ſhall live by his Faith.* For *this Faith,* as St. *Paul* defines it, *Heb.* xi. *is the Subſtance of Things hoped for, the Evidence of Things not ſeen.* We can no otherwiſe apprehend ſuch things, than as they are exhibited to us by the word of God, whence we muſt derive our knowledge of them, and upon which we muſt rely both for the Certainty of their Exiſtence, and the Share which we ſhall have in them. Indeed we have no adequate conceptions of theſe things at preſent; thoſe Divine Oracles which call us to the enjoyment of them, aſſure us that mortal faculties are too narrow to comprehend them; our Eyes cannot ſee, our Ears hear, nor our Hearts conceive of them. Which ſurely is a very powerful Argument to excite our Faith, and make us attend to the Holy Scriptures about theſe things. For if we are perſuaded that they are the words of God, inſtructing us and leading us in the way to his Heavenly Kingdom, we muſt of neceſſity believe that his Way is right, and his Bleſſings as valuable as he repreſents them to be; and if ſo, *how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect them?* and why ſhould we not dread thoſe Puniſhments, which we have equal reaſon to believe are prepared for Infidels? Dare any man ſay, that he wants grounds to believe them, if he admits God to

be the Revealer? who has given us the Authority of his own Word for them, on purpoſe to ſerve inſtead of all other Arguments, and to ſatisfy us as fully as if we had the Evidence of our own Eyes; which indeed we cannot have in this earthly State; for while we are in the Body, we can ſee Spiritual things but very imperfectly, and muſt live by Faith, not by Sight.

INDEED our Evidences of God and Heaven are very ſufficient; and the cauſe of our Atheiſm and Infidelity, is not want of convincing Arguments of the Truth of our Religion, but want of a better Heart to receive the Doctrines, and practiſe the Duties of it. That Pride and Self-conceit which *Habakkuk* complains of in my Text, has deſtroyed Humility and Modeſty, which are the beginning of all true Wiſdom. How few are there, who can properly be ſaid to be endued with the Fear of God, but are much more influenced by the corrupt faſhions and vices of the times, than by any grace of his Holy Spirit? If we could bring into one body all thoſe men, of whom the Holy Pſalmiſt ſpeaks, that *they are ſo proud, they care not for God, neither is God in all their thoughts*, together with thoſe whom the Apoſtle complains of, *who hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*, and while they have a Form of Godlineſs, want the Power, and ſerve their own Luſts and Paſſions more than their Creator and Redeemer; what a ſmall appearance would be left of juſt men walking in their Integrity, and living by Faith? Our Bleſſed Lord has foretold the ſcarcity of ſuch men, ſaying, *When the Son of man cometh, ſhall he find Faith on the Earth?*

THIS is no Objection againſt the Efficacy of the preſent Chriſtian Miniſtry, or the fitneſs of its Ordinances

nances to convert the Hearts of ſinful men. For we know that the main body of mankind have been Infidels under all Religious Diſpenſations; and the moſt Holy Prophets in the *Jewiſh* Church have aſſured us, that they generally found the Heart of man too proud, obſtinate, and carnal, to receive any good Impreſſions from their moſt zealous Exhortations; and that it was well if now and then a man was ſtruck and affected with their words, when they denounced the Judgments of God againſt the Sins of their times.

THIS ſhows that the Hiſtory of the Fall of Man is no Fable. For as at firſt he entred into confederacy with the Devil, and transferred his Allegiance from God to him, ſo he ſtill is manifeſtly under the influence of his Suggeſtions, and commonly led captive by him at his Will, to fight againſt God and deſtroy his Kingdom upon Earth. And it is found by the experience of above five thouſand Years, as impoſſible to convert a world of men, as to reform the Apoſtate Spirits themſelves. The only difference is this, That theſe are wholly paſt Redemption, whereas among the Sons of men there are ſome few Children of God, fore-known to their Heavenly Father; for whoſe Salvation he has revealed the way of Happineſs, firſt by his Prophets, and afterwards by his Son; and ſtill continues the light of his Goſpel in the World, that they may walk in it.

THE number of theſe is unknown to us, but the particulars may be known by their fruits, for they bring forth the fruits of the Spirit of Chriſt; and *they make not proviſion for the fleſh to fulfill the Luſts thereof*, for they live by Faith; they can feaſt upon the things of God and Religion; without theſe their Souls can-

not be ſatisfied, no more than their bodily Appetites without meat and drink. *Their converſation is in Heaven*, they dwell there in Heart and Affections, and are but Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth.

THIS is the only true Life that men can live. All without it is but Dream and vain Imagination. To live with the World's happy People; to be always rioting upon the pleaſures of Senſe, always feeding upon luxurious Entertainments, and running after variety of ſhows and diverſions with the Voluptuous; or laying up Riches, and adding houſe to houſe, and field to field, with the Covetous; or entring the liſts of Contention with the Ambitious for the honours and preferments of the World; what is all this, but enſlaving the Spirit to the Fleſh, and laying a foundation of Happineſs in the waves of this troubleſome World, in ſuch things as are of a tranſitory, inconſtant nature, which fill the Soul with ſuch worms of care and diſtraction, as eat out the real Pleaſures even of this preſent mortal Life!

BUT *he that liveth by the Faith of the Son of God*, has quite different Affections and Notions of things: He conſiders Heaven as his Father's houſe, and chiefly ſtudies how he may become a worthy Member of his Family. To this end he daily endeavours to conform himſelf to the Image of the moſt High, by improving thoſe Graces in his Soul, which are the Rays of his moſt beloved Attributes: and is careful to lay up Treaſure in Heaven, by abounding in ſuch good works here, as he ſhall hear of with Joy at the Tribunal of his Lord.

THIS

THIS is the genius and conduct of the man, who lives by the Faith of Jeſus Chriſt. May we all manifeſt our engraftment into him, by bringing forth the fruits of his Holy Spirit, and order our Converſation here, as men who expect the Reſurrection of the Body, the Judgment of the laſt day, and that Eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven, which Chriſt hath purchaſed for thoſe who ſhall then be found faithful Doers of his Word. To him, *&c.*

SERMON XCII.

On the Twenty-firſt Sunday *after* TRINITY.

EVENING.

PROVERBS i. 33.

But whoſo hearkeneth to me, ſhall dwell ſafely, and ſhall be quiet from fear of evil.

THIS Book of *Proverbs* carries its Author's name in the very entrance and firſt words. I ſay, the Author; for *Solomon* is allowed by the moſt learned *Rabbies*, to be not barely the Collector, but Compoſer of theſe divine ſentences: 'Tis part of the account of that ſupereminent Wiſdom wherewith God endued him, that *he ſpoke three thouſand Proverbs*, of which number this Book is but a part, containing not above *nine hundred*, as they ſtand divided in our Scriptures.

THO' in the Hiſtory of the *Kings* and *Chronicles*, we read nothing of *Solomon*, from the time of his birth, till he came to ſit upon the throne of *Iſrael*, yet he aſſures us in the fourth Chapter of this Book of *Proverbs*, that his Father took great care of his education, and was always inſtilling into him the precepts and commendations of piety and virtue, charging

ing him above all things to labour after a ſpirit of wiſdom, the foundation of which was the fear of God. And we know how earneſtly *David* beſought God, *Pſal.* lxxii. that he would inſtruct this his Son and Succeſſor, and lead him in the ways of his laws and the works of his commandments.

TO theſe prayers and good counſels we may impute it, that *Solomon* was ſo well inclined, that when God came to him in a Viſion, at the beginning of his reign, and bid him ask whatever good thing he moſt deſired, and it ſhould be granted him, he readily petitioned for an underſtanding heart to judge his people, that he might diſcern between right and wrong, good and evil. This requeſt God granted him in ſo great a meaſure, that he proved the wiſeſt of the ſons of men.

FOR tho' the Emperor *Julian*, who revolted from Chriſt to the idolatry of the Pagans, preferred their Philoſophy before the Wiſdom of *Solomon*, in which he is imitated by many Apoſtate Chriſtians at this day, who magnify Pagan Writers above the Holy Bible; yet a much wiſer and better Prince than *Julian*, has recommended this ſingle Book of *Proverbs* as 'a 'Treaſury, ſo full of golden ſentences and moral pre-'cepts, in all things that concern our converſation 'in this World, as among all the prophane Philoſo-'phers and Poets there is not to be found ſo rich a 'ſtore-houſe of natural wiſdom, agreeing with the 'will and divine wiſdom of God.'

NOW the principles which *Solomon* lays down in this Chapter, for the grounding of his young ſtudent in the ſchool of wiſdom, are theſe three which follow. *Firſt*, That he learn to fear God. *Secondly*, That he honour his parents; and *Thirdly*, That he avoid evil

evil company. And theſe principles he preſently enforces, like a good Preacher, with the motives of rewards and puniſhments.

IN the firſt place, *Solomon* lays it down as a firſt principle, and inſcribes it, as I may ſay, over the door of his ſchool, that the young man who enters there, in order to learn the leſſons of wiſdom, *muſt begin with the fear of God.* This he learned of his Father *David*, who has the ſame ſentence, *Pſalm* cxi. 10. And the reaſons of it are largely ſet forth in that Book which bears the Title of *the Wiſdom of Solomon*; which tho' apocryphal to us, yet contains a great deal of excellent matter to this purpoſe. It begins with an exhortation to the governing part of mankind, to think much of God, and apply their hearts to him for the attainment of wiſdom. Which that they may receive, the Author calls upon them to caſt out evil thoughts, and beware of the defilements of carnal affections; becauſe froward thoughts ſeparate from God; his wiſdom will not enter into a malicious ſoul, nor dwell in a body that is under the dominion of ſin. The holy and loving Spirit of wiſdom will never endure a perfidious heart, nor come near a neſt of looſe, vain, and wanton thoughts, nor abide there where unrighteouſneſs hath free admittance.

'WISDOM, proceeds he, is glorious, and ne'ver fadeth; ſhe is eaſily ſeen of them that love her, 'and found of them that ſeek her. She preventeth 'them that deſire her, in making herſelf firſt known 'to them. Whoſo ſeeketh her early, ſhall not need 'to travel for her: he ſhall find her ſitting at his 'doors. For ſhe goeth about ſeeking ſuch as are 'worthy of her, ſhews herſelf favourable to them in 'the way, and meets them in every thought. The

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'very true beginning of her, is the deſire of diſci-
'pline; and the care of diſcipline is love: And love
'is the keeping of her laws: And the giving heed
'to her laws, is the aſſurance of incorruption, and
'incorruption raiſeth us near to God.'

NEXT, this Author tells us, in the perſon of *Solomon*, how he obtained Wiſdom. 'I prayed, ſays
'he, and underſtanding was given me: I called upon
'God, and the Spirit of Wiſdom came upon me.
'I preferred her before Scepters and Thrones, and
'eſteemed riches nothing in compariſon of her. I
'loved her above health and beauty, and choſe to
'have her inſtead of light: For the light that flows
'from her, is never extinguiſhed. All good things
'came together with her: For in her is an under-
'ſtanding Spirit, holy, only begotten, manifold, ſub-
'tile, lively, clear, undefiled, plain, not ſubject to
'hurt, loving the thing that is good, quick, which
'cannot be hindered, ready to do good: Kind to
'man, ſtedfaſt, ſure, free from care, having all power,
'overſeeing all things, and going thro' all underſtand-
'ing, pure and moſt ſubtile Spirits. Wiſdom is moſt
'quick in motion; ſhe paſſes and goes thro' all things
'by reaſon of her pureneſs. For ſhe is the breath of
'the power of God, and a pure influence flowing
'from the Glory of the Almighty. She is the bright-
'neſs of the everlaſting light; the unſpotted mirror
'of the power of God, and the image of his good-
'neſs.'

'THIS Wiſdom I purpoſed to take to me for
'my Spouſe, and with her to repoſe myſelf: For her
'converſation hath no bitterneſs nor ſorrow, but
'mirth and joy. Nevertheleſs, perceiving that I
'could not obtain her, except God gave her to me

'(and

'(and that was a point of wiſdom, to know whoſe 'gift ſhe was) I prayed unto the Lord, and beſought 'him to give me that Wiſdom that ſits by his Throne, 'to ſend her out of his Holy Heaven, and from the 'Throne of his Glory, that ſhe might aſſiſt me, and 'make me know what is pleaſing to God. For ſhe 'knows and underſtands all things; ſhe ſhall lead me 'and preſerve me.'.

FROM all this we may reaſonably conclude, that *Solomon*'s Wiſdom here recommended, is the illumination of the holy Spirit of God. The graces and comforts of that Divine Spirit can alone anſwer the properties of the Wiſdom which is here deſcribed. And the way for any one to attain it, we find, is this, as here laid down, *viz.* To be bred up under a virtuous nurture and diſcipline, to ſubdue the ſenſual paſſions and affections; to accuſtom ones ſelf to a ſolid way of thinking, and contemplating the beauties of piety and virtue: To call upon God by diligent prayer, and maintain an intimate communion with him, and to be perſwaded that he is the only fountain of happineſs, and that it is the greateſt folly and madneſs to do any thing which is contrary to his holy Will and Commandment.

THIS is that *fear of the Lord* which *is the beginning of Wiſdom.* And I wiſh this ſentence were written in all our Courts, Councils, and places of education. For then I ſhould hope it would make a due impreſſion upon the minds of all thoſe who frequent ſuch places: I ſhould hope it would prevail againſt that worldly wiſdom which generally reigns there, and has nothing of the fear of God in it. I ſhould then ſee thoſe men deſpiſed and diſclaimed by a general ſuffrage, who now are celebrated as the wiſeſt heads,

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while they almoſt diſown, they certainly make no good appearance in any form of religion whatever. I ſhould then ſee that good rule put in practice, which ſome of our own Princes have declared for and applauded, that *none but perſons of approved piety ſhould be called up to any publick imployment*. Which rule whether ever it has been obſerved or not, is however a great juſtification of *Solomon*'s maxim, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom. Briefly, I ſhould ſee that opinion exploded, which at preſent is very much in faſhion, that a man may be wiſe, able, and uſeful in the World, with a very ſmall ſenſe of God, or concern for the honour of his name and the ſtate of his true religion and worſhip.

II. NEXT after the fear of God, our royal Preacher injoyns honour and obedience to parents, as a leſſon very neceſſary to be learned by his young ſtudent in wiſdom. This likewiſe he often repeats and inſiſts upon in this Book of *Proverbs*; placing it next in order to the fear of God, according to the method obſerved in the Ten Commandments. For there God himſelf, as ſoon as he hath enacted the Laws which concern his own worſhip, preſently commands children to honour their parents, as the moſt fundamental duty of ſociety and good government in the World.

THIS is the general rule, and the Scripture makes no exceptions from it. Not but that God knew there would be parents which would ſet their children a bad example, and give them wrong advice in ſome things. And ſurely he does not oblige children to hearken to ſuch advice, and follow ſuch examples, when they grow up, and are able to judge for themſelves. But children being by the condition of their birth ſubject to their parents, are bound to live in that ſubjection.

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In ſuch a ſtate of minority they have no power or right to govern themſelves, or to act according to their own will and pleaſure. And whatever principles or manners parents may be of, this is evident in experience, that infinitely more miſchief ariſes from children's diſobedient and obſtinate ſpirits, than from their governable and tractable diſpoſitions in any family whatever.

SO that obedience muſt be the general rule: God and Nature have ſo ordained it. God commands parents to breed up their children in the ways of piety and virtue; to be frequently inſtilling wholſome inſtructions into their tender minds: and nature directs them to wiſh the ſalvation of their poſterity, and adviſe them the beſt they can, how to attain it. Upon theſe grounds it is, that children are obliged by all Laws, divine and human, to hearken to their parents. It is preſumed that parents, however they may follow their own ſinful paſſions, will not indulge their children in libertiniſm, but rather correct them for it, and endeavour to make them better than themſelves. They are juſtly eſteemed as monſters, and therefore I hope rarely to be found, who ſhall make it their buſineſs, by any counſel or advice, to debauch the manners of their own children. I hope there are no members of civil ſociety, for of vagrants and thieves I cannot pretend to any ſuch hopes, but I perſuade myſelf there are no ſettled Families amongſt us, where children are not taught, by ſome means or other, that there is a God, that it is their duty to pray to him, and to live in his fear, and to read and hear his word, and follow the inſtructions of it. I am too ſenſible theſe things are not inculcated ſo conſtantly and carefully as they ſhould be; but I cannot think there are any families

families ſo deeply ſunk in prophaneneſs, as wholly to neglect them.

AS to the condition of children, they cannot teach or govern themſelves, but muſt be under the tuition of parents or others, who muſt govern them during their infancy and childhood; whoſe voice they muſt hearken to, and obey their commands, otherwiſe there can be no ſuch thing as education or government.

HOW careful this wiſe Preacher was, to make children of a tractable and obedient diſpoſition, appears from his much inſiſting upon this duty, and declaring it to be the ſecond fountain of Wiſdom, intimating that children who would be diligent to receive good inſtruction, ſhould never want it, and thereby ſhould attain to an excellent ſpirit, and encreaſe in the eſteem and favour of God and man.

ON the other hand, *Solomon* calls upon us to take notice, that the child who is of a froward ſpirit, and averſe to the inſtructions of his parents and teachers, will prove an empty, inconſiderable man; that he lies open to all the temptations of Atheiſm and Immorality; for, ſays he, *a ſcorner heareth not reproof*; nothing can with-hold him from ruſhing headlong in the way of his own brutiſh paſſions: That he is in the high road to deſtruction, and many times comes to an untimely and ſhameful end: For *the eye that mocketh at his father, and deſpiſeth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley ſhall pick it out, and the young eagles ſhall eat it.* And that if he eſcapes this, yet in concluſion this uninſtructed, untractable wretch ſhall become a burden to himſelf, when his body and eſtate are conſumed, and his ſoul oppreſſed with the guilt of his impieties, he ſhall mourn, and ſay, *How have I hated inſtruction, and my heart deſpiſed reproof! and have*

not

not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that inſtructed me!

III. *SOLOMON* recommends it, as a fundamental point of true Wiſdom, to avoid the company of evil-doers. *My Son, if Sinners entice thee, conſent thou not. Walk not in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path.* He tells his young Scholar, that while he keeps at a diſtance, diſengaged from bad company, he eaſily perceives the fatal ſnares and pits which are in their ways: But if he once takes a pleaſure in their converſation, he quickly loſes his eyes, and becomes as blind as they: The Spirit of God deſerts him, and an evil genius takes poſſeſſion of him.

THE ſeveral ſteps of this infatuation will be eaſily ſeen, by comparing what we find, *Wiſdom* ii. with what we have here before us.

IN that Chapter we find ungodly men exciting one another to the purſuit of ſenſual pleaſures, from the following Topicks.

Firſt, FROM the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of this life. 'We came but lately into the World, ſay they, 'and we muſt quickly go out of it. For our time 'paſſeth away like a ſhadow. We are by a fatal ne-'ceſſity ſubjected to many ſufferings and infirmities, 'and muſt ſhortly be cut off by death, and be com-'mitted to the priſon of the grave, from whence 'there is no redemption.'

Secondly, FROM the ſuppoſed mortality both of Soul and Body. For the moſt comfortable hypotheſis of wicked men is this, that when they are once dead, all is at an end with them. If they can but ſet a tolerable face and colour upon the doctrine of the Soul's mortality, they eaſily juſtify their corrupt practices, and win Proſelytes over to their ſide. Hence

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it becomes moſt natural and familiar to them to reaſon at the rate here repreſented, that as we are born into the World like all other earthly animals, ſo like them we ſhall end in earth again, and be as if we had never been. 'That the breath in our noſtrils is but as ſmoke, and 'life as a ſpark moving in our hearts. Which being 'extinguiſhed, our Body turns into aſhes, and our 'Spirit vaniſhes as the ſoft air. Our name ſhall be 'quickly forgotten, together with our works: Our 'life ſhall paſs away as the trace of a cloud; it ſhall 'be diſperſed as a miſt before the Sun-beams, which 'is overcome with the heat of the day.'

Thirdly, UNGODLY men do their utmoſt to ſtrengthen their party, that they may out-number the ſervants of God. For being Atheiſts in practice, they deſire to make all the world ſo in principle; and becauſe religion is againſt them, they are bitter enemies to all religion. Againſt which the ſumm of their reaſoning is this. 'Come, ſay they, let us take counſel 'againſt the righteous man, becauſe he is not for our 'turn; he is quite contrary to our doings: He up-'braids us with our offending the Law, and objects to 'our infamy the tranſgreſſions of our education. He 'profeſſeth to have the knowledge of God; and calls 'himſelf the child of the Lord. He was made to re-'prove our principles. He is a grievous eye-ſore to 'us: his life and ways are quite different from ours. 'We are eſteemed of him as counterfeits: he abſtains 'from our ways as from filthineſs: he pronounceth 'the end of the Juſt to be bleſſed, and maketh his 'boaſt that God is his Father. Let us ſee if his 'words be true: Let us examine him with deſpite-'fulneſs and torture, and condemn him with a ſhame-'ful death: that we may make tryal of his boaſt-

'ed meekneſs, and prove his patience under ſuffer-
'ings.'

FROM ſuch Topicks as theſe, wicked men animate one another to enjoy the preſent ſtate of things, and take their fill of pleaſure in it. *Come*, ſay they to their new acquaintance, *caſt in your lot among us, and you ſhall find in our ſociety every thing that you can wiſh.*

AND when they have conſumed their ſubſtance in riotous living, that they may raiſe new ſupplies for their luſts, they fail not to oppreſs and ſqueeze all thoſe who are in their power, without any regard of merit, or of the circumſtances of people. They ſpare not the fatherleſs and widow, they reverence not the gray hairs of the aged.

NAY farther, the glittering temptation of heaping up ſilver and gold, and filling their houſes with rich ſpoils, incites them, not ſeldom, *to lay wait for blood, to lurk privily for the innocent without cauſe.* So that many a Libertine, from extravagant ſquandering upon his carnal luſts, has come to aſſociate with cheats and robbers, to turn perjured informer or falſe witneſs, or to abuſe any truſt, office, or authority which he hath had, in doing vile work, for the ſake of enriching himſelf by ſome great reward.

NOW when ſuch temptations as theſe, firſt to ſpend, and then to repair expences by the works of iniquity, are caſt in the way of a young man, who has ſtrong paſſions, weak reaſon, no experience, they light like fire upon combuſtible matter, they preſently ſet him in a flame, by which, without Divine Mercy as great as a miracle, he muſt inevitably periſh.

AND therefore it is a fundamental point of Wiſdom, as *Solomon* here repreſents it, for all men, eſpecially

cially the younger ſort, to avoid evil company; in which whenever they willingly venture themſelves, they do as dangerous a thing as if they went into a peſt-houſe; they will certainly be infected. The Spirit of God, which alone could, and would ſecure them, if they did not throw themſelves into temptation, departs from them, and that juſtly; for they go where he cannot enter; they quit the ſervice of their heavenly King, and go over to the tents of ungodlineſs. They leave the intereſt of true Wiſdom, to embrace that of folly and madneſs; as will appear by a ſhort view of the rewards and puniſhments which the Royal Preacher propounds, in order to enforce the rules which he laid down for the attainment of Wiſdom.

TO begin with the Puniſhment of fools, he introduces Wiſdom, or rather God in the perſon of Wiſdom, making this declaration to them. *Becauſe I called, and ye refuſed; I ſtretched out my hands, and none of you regarded: but ye deſpiſed my counſel, and were deaf to my reproof: I alſo will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.* 'You Atheiſts 'have had your ſeaſon of probation and day of Grace, 'wherein I have ſhown you how much it was your 'intereſt to believe in God and to fear him; and by 'voices from heaven, by the mouth of my Prophets, 'by the diſpenſations of my Providence I have called 'you from darkneſs to light, and from the tyranny of 'Satan to the freedom of my children. But ſince af-'ter all my demonſtrations you have denied me, and 'blaſphemed me for all my condeſcenſions, I will at 'laſt extort a confeſſion from you, that it had been 'your wiſdom to have hearkned to me, and that your 'deafneſs to my inſtructions, and ſecret wiſhes that

'there were no God, was ſuch a fatal deluſion and 'miſconduct, as can never be repaired. For ſuch di-'ſtreſs and deſolation from without, ſuch anguiſh 'and terrors within, ſhall ſeize upon you, as neither 'you, nor any of your friends, nor any created power 'ſhall be able to remove. In theſe deplorable cir-'cumſtances you ſhall have recourſe to the aids of 'religion, and beg of God with earneſt prayers and 'ſupplications to ariſe and help you, and deliver you 'for his mercy's ſake. But your prayers ſhall all va-'niſh in the air, they ſhall never enter into my ears. 'Tho' you invocate me with the greateſt importu-'nity, I will not anſwer; tho' you apply to ſeek me 'carefully and early, you ſhall not find me. Becauſe 'in the days of your proſperity, you hated the know-'ledge of God, and were nothing affected with my 'fear. Neither my inſtructions of righteouſneſs, nor 'reproof of ſin, made any uſeful impreſſions upon 'you. Therefore you ſhall even reap what you have 'ſowed, and eat the fruit of your own planting. You 'ſhall find, that your ſinful ſecurity was your ruin, 'and your impious enjoyments a fool's paradiſe, a 'meer dream and imagination of happineſs.'

SUCH is the ſentence which God pronounces upon the folly of irreligion; and he has pronounced it by the mouth of the wiſe *Solomon*, an unexceptionable judge, from whom there can lye no reaſonable appeal. He has taught us to call impiety Folly, and that with the trueſt propriety of ſpeech. For it is ſuch a folly as doth not betray a man to a little tranſitory damage and contempt, but it leads him to miſtake his main intereſt, to chuſe his entire deſtruction. It is worſe than that *Sardonian* laughter, which old Phyſicians ſpeak of, a diſeaſe whereof the

Patient

Patient died laughing. The fooliſh Atheiſt laughs while he is mortally ſick and miſerably racked within, and affectedly rallying all that is ſacred, goes down to the place of weeping, and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth.

FROM this ſentence we learn the falſe doctrine of Atheiſtical men, That *God is always ready to hear them.* We thankfully acknowledge his gracious promiſes, that he is always ready to hear his own children, to be found of them who are accuſtomed to ſeek him, to be near thoſe who often draw nigh to him. *The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers*; but his face is ſet againſt thoſe who deſpiſe and blaſpheme him; and when they call upon him in the day of adverſity, (for at no other time will they ſeriouſly think of him,) he aſſures them here before-hand, that he will not hear them.

THE contrary doctrine is propagated by the friends of impiety, on purpoſe to ſupport ſuch rebels as themſelves in their Enmity againſt Heaven to the very laſt: Whoſe gates muſt always ſtand open to the worſt of men, and the great King be ready with open arms to receive them, whenever they deſire admittance, if we will believe theſe perverters of ſacred writ.

BUT God and Nature, common ſenſe and reaſon, forbid any to enter there, but only ſuch as now hearken to the Voice of Wiſdom, to the Spirit of true underſtanding ſpeaking in the divine word and ordinances, and calling them to the knowledge and obedience of God. This is the very reaſon why *Solomon* dignifies ſuch men with the character of Wiſe, becauſe they make a right choice of the way wherein they are to walk, and pay a due and timely regard to thoſe

Exhortations which teach them to fear God, to attend to the good inſtructions of parents and teachers, and to avoid the converſation of thoſe who offend God with their Atheiſm, lewdneſs, riotous living, or any groſs and contemptuous violation of his holy Laws. They who are ſo wiſe as to fear God, and to decline communication with his Enemies, are entitled to the bleſſing of my Text; they ſhall dwell ſafely, and ſhall be quiet from fear of evil. They ſhall be delivered from thoſe fears and terrors of a guilty conſcience, which haunt the Scorners of religion: They ſhall be comforted and confirmed under all diſpenſations by a rational faith, hope, and truſt in God; and finally they ſhall have the portion of the wiſe Virgins who were prudently prepared to meet the Bridegroom of their Souls, and ſhall be admitted into the ſame joy of their Lord, thro' his merits who liveth, *&c.*

SERMON XCIII.

On the Twenty-Second Sunday *after* TRINITY.

MORNING.

PROVERBS ii. 6.

For the Lord giveth Wiſdom: out of his mouth cometh Knowledge and Underſtanding.

IT was the cuſtom of many Eaſtern Sages, when their Thoughts ran upon any thing which concerned common Life, to reduce them into ſome ſhort and pithy Sentence, which might eaſily be retained in memory, and applied upon Occaſion as a rule of Action. And none fitter to frame ſuch Sentences than a wiſe King, of univerſal inſight and skill in all matters Human and Divine. From ſuch a perſon they flow, like ſo many Oracles, with the greateſt Authority. For which reaſon *Auguſtus Cæſar*, though he was not the Inventor, was the Compiler of many Religious, Philoſophical, and Politick Maxims; *Suetonius* informing us in the Hiſtory of his life, That when he read any *Greek* or *Latin* Writer, he ſelected ſuch wholſome Precepts as were uſeful in publick or private Life, and recommended them to his Domeſticks, military Officers,

and Magiſtrates of all ſorts, as proper helps for the Conduct of their Government. But that Emperor's work, whatever is become of it, is rendred unneceſſary, by the Proverbs of this wiſeſt of Earthly Kings here before us, which plentifully furniſh us with Maxims of Piety, Prudence and Virtue in all ſtates and conditions of Life whatever.

Of the words of my Text we may ſay as the Diſciples ſaid to Chriſt, *here* Solomon *ſpeaks plainly and without a Proverb*; there is no riddle or myſtery in them; but they contain theſe two plain aſſertions:

I. THAT God is the only Fountain of all true Wiſdom: And

II. THAT the only way which we have to draw Wiſdom out of this Fountain, is, by ſtudying and practiſing the Sacred Oracles of God.

THE firſt of theſe Aſſertions, though one would think it a ſelf-evident truth, has met with much oppoſition from many great pretenders to Wiſdom. They ſay that the Deity is not the only ſource of it, but that much of it may be attained by a converſe with Beings moſt oppoſite to him, even with wicked and reprobate Spirits. Such were the Oracles and Gods of the *Gentiles*, which the wiſeſt men among them, not excepting *Socrates* himſelf, conſulted, to learn of them how to ſet about and manage their moſt weighty Affairs. And multitudes of People there are in the World at this day, who have a mighty opinion of the Wiſdom of theſe Spirits.

BUT this their Opinion, how common ſoever, is a groſs miſtake; and the miſtake ariſes from their confounding the Notions of *wiſdom* and *craft*, or cunning, together, and taking them for one and the ſame thing: whereas they are widely different. For a wiſe

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man cannot maintain his Character, without doing always that which is juſt and right. He may purſue his own Pleaſure, Honour, and Profit, but he muſt purſue them only in ſubordination to the Laws of Piety and Virtue. He may love himſelf: but he muſt likewiſe love his Neighbour as himſelf. He muſt not be ſo fond of any good thing, as to obtain it by the Arts of Fraud and Circumvention. He can ſee the ways of thriving in the World, as well as other men, but his wiſdom will not permit him to make uſe of any means but ſuch as are fair and honeſt. In ſhort, a Wiſe man is vigilant, active, prudent, dextrous in ſpying out all Advantages to benefit himſelf and his Friends; but no-body ſhall ever be able to perſuade him, that an ill thing can be a real Benefit, or the part of a wiſe Man or a true Friend. He is diligent to improve in any uſeful knowledge; he is pleaſed with any external Faculties and Abilities to accompliſh his juſt deſigns: but he will not abuſe them ſo, to gratify himſelf, as at the ſame time to injure and oppreſs others by them.

BUT now a cunning and crafty man lays this down to himſelf for a general Rule, That by all means whatſoever he muſt gain his point, and come at the End which he aims at. And in his purſuit of it, he will proceed in the path of Righteouſneſs, if that leads him moſt directly and eaſily to it. For he has no quarrel againſt the Truth for its own ſake; whenever it is of his ſide, he makes great Oſtentation of it; and no man pleads more for it, and exclaims louder againſt the wickedneſs of thoſe who would pervert it, whenever any injury is like to be done to himſelf. But when the Truth is on the oppoſite ſide, though he ſees it never ſo plainly, yet being immoveable in

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his firſt Principle, which, as I have juſt noted, is to gain his end by any means whatever, he firſt beſpatters this adverſary *Truth* with all imaginable defamations, to render it odious to the Spectators; and then ſtrikes at it furiouſly in this Diſguiſe, to make it fall before his own cauſe, which he paints with all the colours of Sincerity and Honeſty, and proſecutes with ſo much Zeal, that whatever diſcoveries others may make, he may have this chance left to ſalve his Reputation at laſt, that he may paſs for a well-meaning, though miſtaken man.

AND herein conſiſts the great ſtrength of cunning and crafty People, to be able to act their part ſo dextrouſly, and play the Hypocrites ſo well, as to paſs in the World for lovers of the Truth, which they are continually deſtroying; and after all the ill things they have done, to ſeem to be honeſt good men, *i. e.* to carry an appearance of living by rules, while they are under no reſtraints, but make it their whole buſineſs to ſerve their temporal Intereſts, and gratify their carnal Luſts.

THE difference then between the wiſe and cunning Man, is briefly this: the wiſe Man ſtudies to be thoroughly and ſubſtantially good; the cunning Man contents himſelf with the ſhadow and appearance of Goodneſs; the one confines himſelf within the bounds of that which is juſt and right; the other ſcruples not to help himſelf with the arts of falſehood and wrong: the one would rather ſuffer injuries than do them; the other would rather do them to all the World, than ſuffer them to be done to himſelf.

NOW to apply this to the matter in hand, and judge of the Capacity of evil Spirits by theſe Rules: Their commerce with the World has always been

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under the character of ſubtle and crafty Beings. Their Oracles have delivered ſeveral Maxims of Truth and Goodneſs, not for the love of them, but only to purchaſe to themſelves the Reputation of divine Beings; and that they might afterwards more eaſily impoſe evil for good upon thoſe who conſulted them, and be obeyed when they recommended to them ſinful Practices as their bounden Duty, and thoſe ways for their Safety, which brought them to Deſtruction; which was the notorious conſequence and iſſue of many of their Oracles.

AND this confirms the concluſion which we laid down at firſt, that God alone is the Fountain of all true Wiſdom.

AND that which in the next place demonſtrates this, conveying and communicating this Wiſdom to Men, is the Word of God; for *out of his mouth proceedeth knowledge and underſtanding.*

WE cannot properly diſplay and ſet forth the grounds of this Aſſertion, how ſacred Writ comes to be the ſtorehouſe of true Wiſdom, without anſwering two or three Queſtions, which may ariſe from this Aſſertion.

AS 1*ſt*, How does it appear that the Books which are called the Word of God, contain the Precepts of ſound Wiſdom, *i. e.* ſuch rules as, when duly practiſed, will advance the Doer of them to real Happineſs? For this is the great end to which we naturally aſpire, and whatever will not help us to attain it, does not deſerve the name of Wiſdom. For though the ſentence of the old *Roman* Poet *Ennius*, which is to this effect, that *the wiſe Man has learned his Leſſons to ſmall purpoſe, who cannot ſerve himſelf of his Wiſdom*, may ſeem to ſavour of too much Self-love, yet

yet may it be conſtrued to a very honeſt Senſe; that a wiſe Man in all his ſtudies and conduct of Life, will have his own ultimate happineſs in view, and reſcue himſelf by his Sagacity, from all Hardſhips and Sufferings, as much as he fairly can. Now the wiſe Men of the World ſeem to aim at this very end; nay profeſs, that all their concerns with temporal Affairs, are intended as well to render their own lives commodious and eaſy, as to do good in the age and place where they live. But moſt of the World's happy Men do not govern their Actions by the Laws of Holy Scripture; on the contrary, they look upon theſe Laws to be impediments to their temporal Happineſs. So that there is a confeſt contrariety between ſecular and ſacred Wiſdom.

THE ſacred Penman calls *the Wiſdom of Men Fooliſhneſs with God*; and the World's happy Man explodes and rejects Scripture Politicks, as offering him impracticable rules for the conduct of his Affairs. How then can thoſe Books which are ſtyled the divine Word, contain ſuch wiſe Directions as lead Men to Happineſs?

I anſwer, 1*ſt*, OF ſecular Wiſdom, that this is a vulgar Error, that thoſe who follow the ways and faſhions of the World, are truly happy, even in this Life. Poſſibly ſome few there are, or have been, whom the Multitude and promiſcuous croud of Spectators have applauded as the Darlings of good Fortune; but more attentive Obſervers have commonly diſcovered ſomething within, which has preyed upon this imaginary Felicity, and deſtroyed it. And whoever among us are capable of making juſt Obſervations, may be ſatisfied hereof by their own Experience. To which we may add the Suffrage of the

the wiſer ſort of meer human Writers, that temporal happineſs conſiſts rather in the operations of a pious and virtuous Soul, than in the Acquiſition or Poſſeſſion of abundance of good things. I will venture to appeal to the Doctrines of *Epicurus* himſelf, the reputed Father of thoſe who place their Felicity in ſenſual Enjoyments, that it conſiſts neither in the profuſions of the Prodigal, nor the abſtinence of the Miſer; but in a ſober, moderate, and virtuous uſe of agreeable Pleaſures; which very few have either the ability or the diſcretion tolerably to enjoy; and conſequently the World's happy Men, who live without the Laws of divine Wiſdom, are, even in the opinion of their own Sect, very hard to be found.

ON the contrary, 'tis in the power of every Man to be happy, who governs himſelf by the directions of the word of God, becauſe that teaches him to poſſeſs his Soul in Patience, and be content in every ſtate and condition of Life; as truſting in God, whoſe Commands he obeys, that he will lead him in the right way, and grant him a happy Iſſue out of any Affliction. And ſurely he cannot have ſo firm a dependence upon any perſon or thing for his ſuccour, as upon him who by his Power made every Creature, and by his Providence continually governs them. He who is the Lord and Diſpenſer of Happineſs, is certainly our beſt Director and Guide in the way to it. All other lights are but as Glow-worms to the Sun. The wiſeſt ſayings of meer Men are but folly in compariſon of his Word: *Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and underſtanding.*

BUT 2*dly*, Does not this Word of God enjoyn Men, in certain caſes, to ſuffer things very grievous to Fleſh and Blood? We acknowledge that it does ſo; and yet

yet theſe Proverbs of *Solomon*, which ſeldom or never carry our views beyond this Life, do vehemently inculcate upon us a ſtrict adherence to the rules of Piety and Virtue, as what will moſt effectually conduce to our preſent Welfare, let the chances and accidents of our Condition be what they will. Such was the Perſuaſion of this beſt of Politicians and Philoſophers, which he lays for his Foundation, and bravely maintains it all along; and expoſes all the Objections of Atheiſts, Libertines, and Worldlings to the contrary, whom he brands as Fools and Madmen, for pretending to find out any other Happineſs, but what is in the ways of Religion and Virtue. This is a high commendation of his ſacred Maxims, that they are moſt beneficial, both for publick Government and private Life, without reſpect had to any thing hereafter.

HOWEVER, if he has not drawn the Curtain here between temporal and eternal things, he does it very plainly in the next Book, where he gravely admoniſhes the young Libertine to *remember*, in the midſt of all his Jollity, *that God will one day bring him into Judgment* for his lawleſs Sallies and Extravagancies. This is a clear ſuppoſition of a future State, and it fully juſtifies the preference which we gave before to the Wiſdom of acting uprightly and as in the ſight of God, above a dexterity in the dark arts of Fraud and Hypocriſy. For if any Man will ask me, how I prove that it deſerves the name of Wiſdom, and is really for our advantage, to live agreeably to the Laws of God; I anſwer, 'tis evident from hence, that this Legiſlator will raiſe us from the Dead, and judge us, and reward or puniſh us to all Eternity, according as we have obeyed or tranſgreſſed his Laws. *Solomon* indeed proves the

the excellency of this Wiſdom of Obedience, from the general current of ſucceſſes and bleſſings which God vouchſafes to his Servants in this Life. But becauſe there ſeem to be exceptions from his general Rules, and he himſelf has obſerved that oftentimes there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, ſo that we cannot certainly judge of the Love or Diſpleaſure of God by theſe external things; therefore the full illuſtration of this Wiſdom will be at the great day of Judgment and Retribution, to which he likewiſe points, when we ſhall ſee *vaſtly different ſtates of the righteous and the wicked, of him that ſerved God, and of him that ſerved him not.* And this day of tryal and recompenſe being as ſure to come, as any thing that is now doing or already tranſacted, it is a ſufficient vindication of our Wiſdom in making proviſion for it, by doing thoſe things now, which will ſecure to us the joys and comforts of it. With this reſpect we act wiſely and for our real Intereſt, by obeying the divine Laws in all Circumſtances, not only when they are for our temporal Advantage, as many times they are, but even when we cannot obey, without being ſtripped of all that we have, and deprived of life it ſelf on the account of our allegiance to God. At ſuch a juncture we are moſt truly wiſe, when we can immoveably hear our ſelves diſputed againſt, and upbraided with ſtupidity by the Men of the World, for not ſacrificing a good Conſcience to preſent Gain, and ſurrendring our heavenly Inheritance for theſe tranſitory Enjoyments.

ON the other hand, the ſubtle Hypocrite, who thinks himſelf very wiſe, and values himſelf upon his great Parts and Abilities, if he does but accompliſh his unjuſt Deſigns, and at the ſame time conceal his

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evil Arts from the World, is guilty of the moſt deplorable Folly incident to Mankind: Becauſe he lets go the Subſtance for the Shadow; while he is cheating others of a little Money, or ſtealing unlawful Pleaſures, he cheats himſelf of his own Salvation, and ſells his Soul for a Pittance of wretched filthy Luſt or Lucre. And his Folly is farther aggravated, by flattering himſelf that his Frauds are not diſcovered: for though he ſhould eſcape the Notice of Men, which it is not very eaſy for him to do, yet he is always naked and open to the Eyes of that God, whoſe Laws he is breaking, and whoſe Judgment he ſhall undergo for all his moſt ſecret Sins.

HENCE we ſee what Reaſon *Solomon* had to allow none the Character of wiſe Men, but ſuch as fear God; and freely to beſtow the Name of Fools upon all thoſe who reject his Word, and refuſe to be obedient to his Commands.

AND thus we have ſhown how God is the only Fountain of true Wiſdom, and that his Word is the only means of communicating it to us.

THIS ſhould make us all ready and willing to meditate in his Word, and diligently to apply it to the Government of our Lives. For as we cannot practiſe it, unleſs we know it; ſo our knowing it will avail us nothing, except we be doers of it. But if we will believe this great Maſter of Divine Science, we can neither know it, nor do it effectually, except we peruſe it with good Attention, and pray earneſtly for Grace to improve in it. *Thou muſt*, ſays he, *incline thine Ear to Wiſdom, and apply thy Heart to Underſtanding; crying after Knowledge, and lifting up thy Voice for it; ſeeking it as Silver, and ſearching for it as for hid Treaſures: So ſhalt thou underſtand the Fear of the Lord,*

Lord, and find the Knowledge of God. By which Words we muſt conclude, that it is no ſuch eaſy matter as ſome imagine, to make ourſelves Maſters of heavenly Wiſdom; but we muſt joyn much Prayer, Study and Practice together, before we can have a juſt Reliſh and Notion of it.

INDEED it ought to be ſo, according to that ancient Maxim, that *excellent Things are attended with Difficulties*, and not to be attained without much Pains. But then the Attainment of them well rewards the Pains that is taken about them; eſpecially in this Caſe, where every Leſſon that we learn, every Rule that we practiſe, conduces to the Sanctification of our Souls, and raiſes them to a nearer Communion with God, and ſight of ſpiritual Things. And it is a farther Argument why we ſhould be much converſant with the ſacred Writings, becauſe they only contain the Words of eternal Life. Other Maſters can inſtruct us in the Arts and Sciences which concern the preſent Life, but the ſacred Penmen alone *are able to make us wiſe unto Salvation.*

LET us then take the royal Preacher's Word for it, that this Science of Divine Wiſdom requires very intenſe and ſerious Application of Mind, thoroughly to apprehend it. Or if we are not ſufficiently moved by his Authority, let us hear a greater than *Solomon*, even the Son of God himſelf, who not in one, but a great many Paſſages of his Goſpel, calls for diligent Diſciples both to hear his Will and to do it. Of which Number may all of us be found, through his Grace who liveth and reigneth, *&c.*

SERMON XCIV.

On the Twenty-ſecond Sunday *after* TRINITY.

EVENING.

PROVERBS iii. 9, 10.

Honour the Lord with thy ſubſtance, and with the firſt-fruits of all thine increaſe: ſo ſhall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy preſſes ſhall burſt out with new wine.

THE author of my Text, when he had built a moſt ſumptuous and magnificent Temple for the worſhip of God, humbly acknowledges that neither Earth nor Heaven could afford any thing worthy of the divine Majeſty, who is all-ſufficient and infinitely happy without the ſervices of Angels or Men. But they are wretched and deſtitute of all felicity, without the gracious providence of the moſt High, to which they muſt ever recommend themſelves by proper acts of homage and worſhip. So that tho' Religion contributes nothing to the happineſs of the Deity, yet is it abſolutely neceſſary for the well-being of us his creatures, who derive all our comforts from his infinite fulneſs.

NOW

NOW we are bound to honour and ſerve God, not only with the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart, but alſo with our worldly goods, by applying a ſhare of them to the ſupport and maintenance of Religion, in ſubſiſting thoſe who are ſet apart for the adminiſtration of God's Word and Sacraments, and erecting or upholding the ſacred Edifices, where they are to be adminiſtred.

THE Hiſtories of all civilized Countries will inform us, that their Temples and Churches have generally out-ſhone the reſt of their buildings, as well in their outward ſtate and magnificence, as in the richneſs of their inward ornaments and furniture: And what exact care was taken to keep them clean and undefiled, we may conclude from the ancient and preſent cuſtom in the *Eaſt*, where the people are not permitted to enter into them with any ſoil upon their feet.

AS for the whole Nation of the *Jews*, that they were very ſtudious of cleanlineſs in their religious Worſhip, we are abundantly aſſured by the *Levitical* Law, and various paſſages in the *Pſalms* and the Prophets. *Maimonides*, that great Oracle of the latter *Rabbies*, obſerves, that it was not lawful for any man to enter into their holy Places in his working apparel, or duſty ſandals. And even here, in theſe weſtern parts of the world, they ſtill conform to theſe ancient rites of veneration, as far as the nature of the Country will permit.

AS for the *Mahometans*, thoſe who have been diligent obſervers of their ways, and have had the beſt opportunity for it, by living many years among them, have often told us, that when they come to their Moſques to prayers, they waſh themſelves, put off

their ſhoes, and leave them at the door, or elſe enter in very clean ſandals.

AND that we may not want an inſtance of this purity amongſt *Chriſtians*, an *Ethiopian* Biſhop, who came Ambaſſador from *Abyſſinia* to *Portugal* about two hundred years ago, gives much the ſame account of his Countrymen, that they are not allowed to go into the Church with their ſhoes on, nor to walk, or talk, or laugh, or ſo much as ſpit there, but muſt compoſe themſelves to the greateſt decency and gravity.

THE concluſion which I would draw from theſe Hiſtories, is naturally this, That all theſe people adorned their places of worſhip with the choiceſt furniture, and preſerved them in the moſt elegant and cleanly condition; otherwiſe their delicacy had been abſurd and ridiculous, in prohibiting any defilement to be brought into a place which was defiled before, and, as it is too often ſeen amongſt us, had not the cleanlineſs of one of our own houſes.

I confeſs ſuch an external ſanctity may ſeem very impracticable, and very ſuperſtitious to us, who have undergone ſo many revolutions in our Religion, that our notions of theſe things are horribly vitiated, and many amongſt us who are grave profeſſors of inward purity, are ſuch avowed enemies to all outward ornaments of worſhip, that they would reduce their Saviour to the primitive entertainment of the ſtable and the manger.

BUT ſuch prophane avarice is moſt contrary to the injunction of my Text, *That we ſhould honour our Lord with our beſt ſubſtance*; and to the whole tenor of holy Scripture, which every where requires decency, beauty, and order, in our religious worſhip.

And

And that with regard to the Majeſty of God, who is higher than the higheſt, and yet humbleth himſelf to behold the things that are in Heaven and in Earth. And tho' he dwelleth not in Temples made with hands, in that notion which the *Gentiles* had of their Deities, that they were confined day and night to thoſe places where their ſhrines were fixed and dedicated, yet has he declared that he prefers ſacred above common houſes, and that in them more eſpecially will he hear and accept the prayers of his people. And accordingly devout men and women of all generations have reſorted to ſuch places for religious Communion with God, and eſteemed it as their greateſt infelicity when they have been driven from them, or when ſuch places have been perverted to other uſes. Which regret has ariſen from this perſwaſion, that they have been debarred from the more immediate preſence of God, and could not hold ſuch free and filial communion with him any where, as in his holy Temple.

ALL mankind have ever been of opinion, that God and his holy Angels are preſent in a more eſpecial manner in theſe conſecrated places. And accordingly the Miniſters of Religion do commonly make an argument of this awful preſence, to encline the people to more than ordinary reverence and attention. St. *Paul* ſpeaking of comely and decent ornaments to be uſed in religious Aſſemblies, and particularly that women ſhould be vailed on ſuch occaſions, enforces this rule from the preſence of Angels, 1 *Cor.* xi. 10. *For this cauſe*, ſays he, *ought the woman to have a covering on her head, becauſe of the Angels*; i. e. becauſe of their more ſpecial preſence there; for otherwiſe the reaſon will not hold, that women ſhould be more covered in the houſe of prayer than any where elſe, if

the Angels were not more preſent there than in other places.

THE ancient Fathers of the Church perſuade their people to a venerable deportment in their religious Aſſemblies, from the like conſideration, that they are under the inſpection of heavenly Beings, as will appear from a few of many paſſages, which I ſhall here lay before you.

ST. *Chryſoſtom*, Hom. 36. on 1 *Cor.* reproves the irreverent behaviour of his auditory in talking, walking, and ſaluting one another; he tells them they were ſingular in ſuch freedoms, ſuch as no Chriſtians in the world preſumed to take in the Church beſides themſelves; and he enforces his reproof with ſuch words as come home to our purpoſe. 'The Church, 'ſays he, is no market, publick houſe, factor's hall, 'or workman's ſhop; but a place frequented by An-'gels and Archangels, the palace of God, and an 'embleme of Heaven.'

'THE ſame eloquent Father, towards the end of his fourth Homily concerning *the incomprehenſible Nature of God*, ſpeaks to this effect. 'Conſider in whoſe 'preſence you ſtand, and with whom you join in the 'invocation of God; with no leſs than Cherubims 'and Seraphims, and all the Powers of Heaven. Do 'but remember what company you are in, and it 'will be ſufficient to perſuade you to be modeſt and 'ſerious, when you conſider that you who are com-'poſed of fleſh and blood, are joined with the in-'corporeal powers to celebrate the common Lord 'of all.'

AGAIN, *Hom.* 15. on the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, againſt thoſe who laughed in the Church: 'If 'ſays he, you were in a Prince's court, you would 'compoſe

'compoſe your dreſs, your looks, and your whole 'carriage to modeſty and gravity. But know that 'you are in the palace and court of heavenly Beings; 'and will you wantonly laugh in their preſence? 'Tis true, you do not ſee them; but know that 'Angels are every where, and chiefly in the houſe of 'God, attending upon their King, whoſe preſence 'is filled with thoſe incorporeal Powers.'

LASTLY, In his ſixth Book *of the Prieſthood*, near the beginning, ſpeaking there of the Time when the Euchariſt is celebrated, he affirms, that 'the An-'gels ſtand by the Prieſt, and that there is a whole 'choir of celeſtial Beings round about the altar, in 'honour of him who is laid thereon.' And St. *Ambroſe* teaches the ſame doctrine: 'Doubt not but an 'Angel is more immediately preſent, whenever Chriſt 'is offered.

I ſhall only add a paſſage out of *Tertullian* to this purpoſe, who lived within two hundred years after Chriſt; it is in his diſcourſe *of prayer*, where reproving the unmannerly carriage of ſome who ſat at the prayers of the Church, he tells them: 'If it be an 'uncivil thing to ſit before a man who is much your ſu-'perior, and deſerves to be reſpected of you, what a 'prophane geſture is it to ſit in the preſence of the 'living God, the Angel of prayer ſtanding by you? 'By ſuch an act you do in effect upbraid the divine 'Majeſty with the weariſomneſs of his ſervice.'

NOW if any man will go about to elude this argument for decency in Churches, by ſaying, that whatever appearances of Angels there were in the patriarchal and primitive times, there are no manifeſtations of them in our worſhip at this day: Why true it is, we have no outward demonſtrations of their preſence;

but it is a moſt unqueſtionable and eminent part of their Miniſtry to be guardians and attendants about the ſervants of Chriſt, *Heb.* i. 14. to maintain communion between the Church militant and triumphant, and to ſupport us againſt the tyranny and machinations of reprobate ſpirits. If we are deſtitute of ſuch guardianſhip and aſſiſtance from them, eſpecially at the time and place of religious worſhip, the fault muſt be our own; either in that we neglect and contemn the Church of Chriſt, or behave ſo unſuitably in it, as cauſeth theſe holy Spirits to loath our ſociety, and leave us to our own ſordid genius. But if we are truly careful to worſhip God in a becoming manner, if we honour him with our ſubſtance as well as with our ſouls and bodies, then we are ſure that ſuch pure and hallowed devotions will be regarded by the heavenly Inhabitants with pleaſure and joy, as nearly approaching to the beauties of their own holineſs.

AND thus you have heard the argument of St. *Paul* and the primitive Fathers, which pleads for the dignity and reverence of God's houſe above all other places. Who now that conſiders and believes this, will not cry out with devout *Jacob*, when he ſaw the Angels aſcending and deſcending at *Bethel*, *How venerable are theſe places?* What an awe and dread ſhould they ſtrike into us? For every place dedicated to God is a *Bethel*, where there is a more immediate communion between Heaven and Earth. How willing ſhould we be *to honour the Lord with our ſubſtance*, in adorning ſuch places? How modeſt and ſerious when we come hither to preſent our ſelves before him?

CERTAINLY 'tis moſt unjuſt and impious in man to deny God a place where his honour may dwell.

And

And very amazing it is, that any ſect of Chriſtians ſhould eſteem it a proper demonſtration of their zeal for his name, to demoliſh or deface the buildings or ornaments of Religion, when our Lord himſelf hath aſſured us, that not to repair them, when there is occaſion, provokes the divine Wrath. For he chaſtiſed the prophaners of the Temple with remarkable indignation, and hath thereby condemned thoſe falſe pretenders to his holy Spirit, who ſet up for a mental devotion againſt all outward ceremony and ſolemnity; grounding themſelves upon ſuch paſſages of Scripture which call for ſpiritual Worſhip, which ſay that the bodies of ſanctified Chriſtians are Temples of the Holy Ghoſt. Theſe expreſſions, moſt excellent in themſelves, are not intended to abrogate the outward profeſſion and method of Religion; for this would be to extinguiſh the light of Chriſt's Goſpel before men. But we have not ſo learned Chriſt: We have heard from his own word, that whoſo preferreth any thing of this world before him, is not worthy of him; and that none but his enemies and perſecutors rejoice, when he is ſtripped of the ornaments and enſigns of his honour.

IT is very perverſe and abſurd in any men, to pretend a zeal for exalting Chriſt's Kingdom, while they throw down the pillars of it, and refuſe to contribute to thoſe outward means, which alone can propagate his faith in the world. When I ſay, *alone*, I mean, as the courſe of things is now ſettled. For the divine Power can work his good pleaſure and execute his decrees in what way and manner ſoever he pleaſes. But at preſent, outward means are the only way whereby he chuſes to make himſelf known upon Earth.

SUCH

SUCH are the reaſons on the ſide of Religion, why we ſhould adorn it with our ſubſtance, to render it amiable, that we may take the greater delight in it our ſelves, and make it to be admired and embraced by others.

LET us now ſee what temporal advantage we may hope for to our ſelves, by thus dedicating ſome part of our ſubſtance to the ſervice of God.

THE author of my Text expended a vaſt treaſure in building the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, and therefore he was able from his own experience to ſpeak of the ſucceſs of ſuch piety. You hear what he ſays in my Text. And the Hiſtory of his Life informs us, that his reign was proſperous and full of peace and quietneſs, that he had great forces by ſea and land, that he exceeded all the Kings of the Earth in riches, and that his people enjoyed an affluence of all good things.

GOD every where appeals to his people, and the Hiſtory of his dealings with them makes it evident, that they were always well rewarded for every thing which they laid out to his honour and ſervice. And he promiſes the like bleſſings to thoſe that ſhould contribute to the ſtructure and furniture of the ſecond Temple. 'There is not a man among you, 'ſays he, that ſhuts a door in my houſe, or kindles 'a fire on mine altar for nothing. Bring ye all the 'tithes into the ſtore-houſe, that there may be meat 'in my houſe, and prove me now herewith, if I will 'not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour 'you out a bleſſing, that there ſhall not be room 'enough to receive it. And all Nations ſhall call 'you bleſſed; for ye ſhall be a delightſome Land, 'ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.' *Malachi* i. iii.

BUT

BUT we need not be over-curious in ſearching the records of ancient times, to diſcover what temporal advantages and tokens of God's love they have received, who have erected or repaired any of his houſes; and what damages they have ſuſtained, who have acted a contrary part. We cannot but ſee many inſtances of both ſorts amongſt our ſelves. There are at this day many families, whoſe anceſtors were very rich and honourable, now covered with obſcurity and poverty, and juſt enough left of them to be monuments of God's diſpleaſure, becauſe they were inſtrumental in demoliſhing his Churches, or alienating the revenues of them. On the other hand, many families who have been the reſtorers of ſuch depredations, live in great eſteem and proſperity, and are viſibly bleſſed with the favour of God and man. Even the publick ſtate, I doubt not, flouriſhes in proportion to the honour and glory which is given to God this way. I am very much perſuaded, that the health and peace and plenty which we have long enjoyed, is the reward of that Zeal for the Church of Chriſt, and the education of poor children in his Religion, which, thanks be to God, has for a long time ſhone forth eminently amongſt us.

THIS City in particular has eſcaped the judgments of peſtilence, famine, and ſword, and daily improves in ſtrength and beauty, becauſe the houſes of God are for the moſt part repaired and ſupported in a becoming manner, and his worſhip well frequented and performed in them.

AND thus much of the temporal advantages which we daily reap, by dedicating part of our ſubſtance to the honour of God in theſe places.

BUT

BUT the ſpiritual Bleſſings which are here exhibited to us, are principally to be regarded by us. We have here a place which is an embleme of Heaven, wherein the Majeſty of God vouchſafes to hold a more intimate and ſpecial communion with us: Where we meet together to make that open confeſſion of Chriſt, which he has promiſed to recompenſe with owning us before Angels and men at the laſt day. Here we aſſemble together to offer up our prayers and thankſgivings with united hearts and voices to the throne of Grace. Here the Word and Sacraments, the means of our ſanctification and renovation of mind, are ſolemnly and devoutly adminiſtred to us. In ſhort, here all the articles of faith, and rules of a righteous, ſober, and godly life, are ſo conſtantly inculcated, that no man who yields any reaſonable attention to them, can be ignorant of them.

BY God's bleſſing upon this method of teaching in our Churches every Lord's day, our Religion has been preſerved and conveyed down to us, thro' all the perſecutions which the enemies of it have raiſed to ſuppreſs and extinguiſh it. Inſomuch that *Julian* the Apoſtate, who imployed his imperial authority and great learning to ſet up the ſuperſtition of the *Pagans* againſt it, when he had tried all the arts and methods which he could invent, he could find nothing more effectual to his purpoſe, than to recommend it to his Heathen Prieſts, that they ſhould preach up the worſhip of Idols to the people once a week, in like manner as the Miniſters of the Goſpel did the Chriſtian Religion. And this might have conduced much to the accompliſhment of his deſign, if the native worth and excellence of Chriſtianity had not quite overbalanced the levities and abſurdities of Idolatry.

But

But the doctrines of our holy Religion, containing in them the ſublimeſt principles of divine Knowledge, and the beſt precepts of holy Living, nothing could be better contrived to lead men to true happineſs, as well in this life as in that which is to come, than to have them weekly taught and explained in publick, ſo that all Chriſtians may have them as it were continually ſounding in their ears. And the civil Government of every Chriſtian Nation is no leſs benefited hereby, than the Eccleſiaſtical. Becauſe every one is here conſtantly admoniſhed of his duty to God, his Neighbour, and himſelf: Subjects are inſtructed to obey thoſe who have lawful authority over them, children to be dutiful to their parents, ſervants to be faithful to their maſters, and all ſuperiors and parents to be merciful and affectionate to their relatives and dependents.

IN the regular diſcharge of which duties the happineſs of every Family, Society, and Country conſiſts. To be weekly excited to theſe ſocial virtues and good offices, is certainly the moſt proper means to induce men to the practice of them. And we may juſtly conclude, that the publick weal and tranquillity maintained amongſt us, is owing to this more than to any other kind of diſcipline. And it is not to be doubted, but if our Churches were taken away, and this method of teaching failed, the generality of people, in a very few years, would fall into as groſs ignorance and barbarity, as were ever known amongſt the worſt of our *Pagan* anceſtors.

LET us teſtify our grateful acknowledgments of the benefits and comforts which we receive here, by dedicating part of our ſubſtance to the repairs and ornaments of this ſacred Place, and that *not grudgingly*,

ingly, or of neceſſity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. As we deſire that our heavenly Father ſhould make haſte to help us whenever we cry unto him, ſo let us ſhew our ſelves zealous and forward to honour him with his own gifts, that he may behold in every one of us a willing mind to render unto him the tribute and homage of obedient ſervants, and then we ſhall rejoice in his preſence, and in the light of his countenance, as having a well-grounded aſſurance of his gracious approbation and acceptance of us.

BUT while I am exciting you to honour God by your cheerful contributions to the repairs of his houſe, I muſt not omit the due praiſes of one who hath already contributed to this work: I mean that pious and charitable Matron, lately tranſlated from this to a ſuperior and happier Communion, who ſeriouſly laid to heart the ruinous condition of this houſe, and begun the repairs of it by a bountiful donation, which I hope will amount to a third part of the expences which have been laid out upon it. Bleſſed be God for raiſing up amongſt us ſuch an eminent inſtrument of his honour and our comfort; and bleſſed be all thoſe who have concurred with this good motion, and lent their aſſiſtance to ſet forward and to accompliſh this moſt neceſſary, moſt laudable work.

IT now remains that we all make a right good uſe of this bleſſing, and ſtudy to anſwer the deſign and reaſon of it, by frequenting and duly attending upon the worſhip of God in this place. *Let us not forſake the aſſembling of our ſelves together, as the manner of ſome is,* who deſpiſe the communion of Saints, and diſown the family and houſhold of faith, and therefore no wonder if they grudge to part with any thing which is demanded of them for the ſupport of ſuch communion.

BUT

BUT I am perſwaded that far the greateſt part, if not every one here preſent, is endued with a better ſpirit and ſenſe of his true intereſt, and that the inconveniencies we have ſuffered by a ſhort interruption of our meeting together in this place, have raiſed our eſteem of the advantages and comforts we enjoy in the uſe of it.

LET us be careful to accompany this outward adorning with a ſuitable behaviour, with the ſanctification of our ſouls and bodies, offering to God the ſacrifice of clean hands and pure hearts, that after we have glorified him here with all our talents, all our faculties of mind, body, and eſtate, we may be glorified of him in that Church which knows no ruin nor decay, *that houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*, which our bleſſed Saviour hath prepared for and opened to all Believers; to whom with the Father, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON XCV.

On the Twenty-Third Sunday *after* TRINITY.

MORNING.

PROVERBS xi. 11.

By the Bleſſing of the upright the City is exalted: but it is overthrown by the Mouth of the wicked.

THIS is one of King *Solomon*'s political Maxims, an excellent Remark on the Cauſes of the flouriſhing or ruinous State of any Nation or Society of Men.

AND ſurely this King was admirably qualified to make ſuch Obſervations, as having earneſtly beſought God, at the beginning of his Reign, to give him a wiſe and underſtanding Heart, for this very Purpoſe, that he might be capable of adminiſtring his Government in the beſt manner; and God fully granted his Petition.

AND his own thorough Knowledge of the World had informed him, that publick Happineſs, according to common Eſtimation, conſiſts in a general good Health, and Peace, and Plenty of all Things fit for the uſe of Man. But he knew withal that the Manners of Men, more eſpecially of thoſe who are employed

ployed in Governments, are the fundamental and meritorious Cauſe of theſe Things. To their different Morals therefore he imputes the publick Proſperity or Misfortunes. *By the Bleſſing of the upright the City is exalted: But it is overthrown by the Mouth of the wicked.*

BY the *Upright* here, we are to underſtand, Men of ſufficient Abilities for the Stations which they fill, and of Piety and Reſolution enough to diſcharge the Duties of their Places. For inſtance, an upright King, or ſupreme Governor of any Denomination, conſiders himſelf as the common Father of his People: in purſuance of which Character, he hath, in all his Conduct, an Eye to their Felicity. And knowing how prone Children are to tranſcribe their Parents Manners into their own Practice, he is very careful to ſet them a fair Copy of Piety and Virtue in his own Example. And as a wiſe and affectionate Father of a private Family, will not, if he knows it, take ſuch wicked Servants into his Houſe, nor, when he ſends his Children abroad, place them under the Government of ſuch People, as are likely to corrupt their Morals, or abuſe them in their juſt Rights and Privileges: So a good and gracious Prince, ſince he cannot be every where in Perſon, will be careful, without Favour or Affection, to ſet ſuch Magiſtrates over his People, as are Men fearing God, and hating Iniquity, and will honeſtly ſtudy to preſerve them *in Wealth, Peace, and Godlineſs*, i. e. to promote both their temporal and eternal Felicity; and will certainly remove thoſe whom he once plainly diſcovers to be otherwiſe. And thus much of the general Spring of Proſperity, as it diffuſes it ſelf over a whole Nation, in the Care and Conduct of the ſupreme Governor.

BUT becauſe it might be in *Iſrael*, as it is with us, that particular Cities and Societies of Men have the Election of their own Magiſtrates, at leaſt ſeveral of them, wherein the Prince can only wiſh them well; therefore *Solomon* gives them this good Advice: 'If ye have any Concern for the welfare of your 'Community, endeavour to prefer ſuch Men to the 'chief Places in it, as not only profeſs themſelves well 'affected to the Worſhip of God, but are known and 'ſeen duly and conſcientiouſly to attend upon it, 'living and acting as in his Preſence, and as thoſe who 'muſt one day anſwer it to him, how they have re-'garded his Word, and employed the Talents which 'he has given them, to his Honour and the Benefit 'and Comfort of his People. Such Men as theſe 'will derive a Bleſſing both upon themſelves, and the 'place where they live: *By their Righteouſneſs a City 'ſhall be exalted.*' And that various ways, as

I*ſt*, WHEN righteous Magiſtrates are in Authority, good Laws are enacted, and impartially adminiſtred; Virtue meets with its Encouragements, and Vice with its due Reſtraints and Puniſhments. For ſuch Magiſtrates have no Crimes of their own, to make them aſhamed or afraid to puniſh them in other Offenders: No corrupt Affections or ſelfiſh Views, to incline them to give a wrong Sentence in Judgment; to reject a virtuous and worthy Perſon, when he ſues to them for any Preferment, and to confer it upon ſome wicked, worthleſs Wretch, only becauſe he or his Friends are more able to *remunerate*. This Conſideration, alas! often prevails for the Suffrage of a Man in Power, that by ſerving the Party recommended to him, he ſhall have his own turn ſerved another time. But if ſuch Party be much worſe qualified

lified than others who ſue for the ſame Favour, then ſuch *Elector* betrays his truſt, and proſtitutes the publick Welfare to his own private Advantage. He does an Act which diſcourages virtuous Induſtry, and obviates the Deſigns of thoſe who would leave farther Rewards to it, by plainly perverting the Wills of ſuch as have already made Proviſion for it. He provokes the Diſpleaſure of the God of Truth and Juſtice, who delights to ſee theſe Virtues exerciſed in the Earth, and is proportionably offended with the Men of any place where he ſees them neglected. But when the Laws are juſtly executed, the Gifts of Benefactors rightly applied, and good and bad Men diſtinguiſhed by proper Rewards and Puniſhments, God and Man are pleaſed with ſuch Adminiſtrations, and conſent to favour the Places where they are exerciſed.

II*dly*, THE faithful Diſpenſers of the ſincere Word of God, muſt needs contribute very much to the Happineſs of the Place where they live. Becauſe by their frequent Exerciſe of devout Prayers, and Preaching, and Adminiſtration of the Sacraments, and other Acts of ſpiritual and holy Converſation, they reconcile God to Men, and at the ſame time turn the Hearts of ſome Men at leaſt to the Love and Fear of God. Thoſe who know any thing of true Happineſs, are ſatisfied that it conſiſts in our worthy Notions and exalted Contemplations of the Divine Majeſty; and that every clearer Manifeſtation of him to our Souls, makes an Addition to our ſpiritual Comfort; that to glorify, praiſe, and honour him, is our beſt Employment and moſt deſirable Life. And therefore thoſe who propagate the Knowledge of God, and excite Men to glorify him, muſt in reaſon be eſteemed the Inſtruments of Men's Felicity. The World, as bad as it is, has

ever ſo eſteemed them, and diſputes not the Truth of that ſacred Oracle which declares, *that thoſe who turn many to Righteouſneſs, ſhall ſhine as the Sun in the Kingdom of their heavenly Father.* Dan. xii. 3. Matt. xiii 43.

III*dly*, EVERY upright Man, of what Station ſoever, is a Bleſſing to the Place where he lives. If he ſanctify the Name of God with his Mouth, and acknowledge him in all his Ways; attending on the Exerciſe of his Worſhip whenever he has Opportunity, eſpecially at the Seaſons of God's own appointing: If he be true and juſt in all his Dealings, beneficent according to his Ability, ſober and temperate in his Pleaſures, meek and merciful in his Treatment of others: In ſhort, if he have ſo much of a publick Spirit, and Principle of humanity in him, as to deſire his Neighbours Proſperity as well as his own, and be ready upon all reaſonable Occaſions to do good Offices to others, as he would be glad they ſhould do for him when he wants them; ſuch a Man as this, is a very good Member of any civilized Community. And if Men of this Character did but out-number a contrary ſort, in all the trading Parts of our Nation, then every Town, City, and Society among us, would ſoon be in a very comfortable and flouriſhing Condition. Such Righteouſneſs would eſtabliſh our Foundations, and mingle Bleſſings with all our Goods and Riches.

LET us now proceed to the other Branch of my Text, which points out the Cauſe of a contrary Effect, affirming that a *City is overthrown and brought to Deſtruction by the Mouth of the wicked.* And this too happens in all the aforementioned Caſes.

I. AT the Tribunals of Juſtice, in tryals of right and wrong, an unjuſt Sentence has often proceeded from

from the mouth of a partial Judge, a corrupt Jury, or a falſe Witneſs. A written Law is ſometimes put upon the wrack, till it ſpeaks the Senſe of thoſe who have the handling of it, very different from the intent and meaning of the Legiſlator. And though the Law be permitted to ſpeak its natural and genuine Senſe, yet if the Cauſe to be try'd by it, be miſrepreſented, the iſſue thereof muſt needs be unjuſt. Both theſe ways are very offenſive to God, who has laid the ſtricteſt injunctions upon all that are concern'd about Tribunals, to declare the truth, without turning from it for any motive of love or hatred, hope or fear whatſoever. He has repeated his abhorrence of a prevaricating Tongue, and threatned to puniſh it with the ſevereſt Judgments. And thoſe who ſwear to ſpeak according to Truth, do wittingly ſubject themſelves to all the effects of God's diſpleaſure, when they ſwear falſely. So that they arm the avenging hand of Divine Juſtice againſt them, and carry a Curſe with them where-ever they go. And they are farther general Enemies to mankind, in that they defeat the Innocent in the laſt reſort that he has in this World to make the juſtice of his cauſe appear; they oftentimes murder him by an unjuſt death, and ſubvert his whole Family, by diveſting them of all their Goods and Poſſeſſions. They turn the edge of that Sword againſt all ſorts indifferently, which was deſigned *for a terror to none but Evil-doers*. And this may ſuffice to ſhew how deſtructive the mouth of the wicked is to a Community, when it perverts the current of Juſtice and Judgment.

II. IN diſpenſing the divine Word, and treating of the Myſteries and Doctrines of Religion, it is of moſt deſtructive conſequence to the People, if the

mouth of the wicked have the handling of them. For then the People will be ſure to be divided by that Religion which was deſigned to unite them, and be emboldned to diſobey God by the authority of his own miſ-interpreted Word. This is ſo true, not in meer ſpeculation, but woful experience, that the Foundations of all good Government have been unſettled by ſome ſuch Interpreters; and ſcarce a paſſage of Sacred Writ, which was written for man's Salvation, but what has been wreſted to his Deſtruction, and made a warrant for his committing ſome Sin. How miſchievous muſt this be to any City or Society; when the Members of it are taught to claſh with one another upon principles of Conſcience, *and hold the truth of God in unrighteouſneſs.* Pure Religion is certainly the very beſt Cement of civil Society, as mightily enforcing the duties of Unity, Peace, and Love among men: but Religion corrupted in the Doctrines of Faith or Practice, carries with it the Seeds of endleſs ſtrife and contention, and miniſters occaſion to continual debates and animoſities. This is *changing the Bread of life into a Serpent or a Scorpion.* Nothing can tend more to diſſolve the Kingdom of Chriſt, than the dividing and ſubdividing of it by various errors, which are the Tares ſown by our Spiritual Adverſary, to deſtroy the Wheat; and in ſome once flouriſhing parts of our Chriſtian World it has been long ſince quite deſtroy'd by them.

III. IN the daily Affairs and Tranſactions of common Life, the mouth of the wicked does much towards the deſtroying the Publick good. Conſider the Blaſphemies and Execrations which are daily vented by all ſorts of People among us, and wonder that our *Iſland* is not long ſince ſwallowed up of the Sea,

or conſumed by fire from Heaven. Not that this is an argument that God does not hear nor regard what paſſes in the World: far from it; his wrath has evidently been revealed from Heaven againſt all Iniquity and Impiety. There is not a reigning Crime in this or the former Ages of the World, which has not been ſo plainly animadverted on by a ſupernatural Power, that all who ſaw it, might ſay, *This hath God done, and perceive very well that it was his work.* But his general method with theſe Miſcreants is, Patience, Forbearance, and Long-ſuffering, *not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance.* However, though he does not inſtantly transfix the Blaſphemer with his thunder, yet the Impiety itſelf is an immediate Puniſhment to the place where it is committed. It reproaches the Community as a company of Atheiſts, who can endure that the Deity ſhould be thus inſulted and affronted amongſt them. It is moſt grating and offenſive to the ears of pious Perſons, who abhor ſuch wretches as the common Enemies of God and all Goodneſs. It gives them an idea of the infernal Regions, where raging Blaſphemy reigns triumphant. It certainly withholds many divine Bleſſings from ſuch an execrable crew: The Spirit of God is gradually reſtrained, and finally withdrawn from them. The comforts of Nature loſe their taſte, and even the beams of the Sun grow languid, and are much impaired in their influence upon ſuch accurſed ground.

BESIDES, there is a canker in the Commerce, a leproſy in the goods of a People devoted by their Perjuries and Execrations to the tyranny of reprobate Spirits. For can any thing of a bleſſing reſt upon thoſe, *whoſe delight and pleaſure is in Curſing and Lies?*

Suppoſe they reſort ſometimes to the Houſe of Prayer, what can their Prayers avail, if they may be ſaid to pray at all, *whoſe tongues* in the general *are ſet on fire of Hell*, as St. *James* ſpeaks? So then, ſo many Prayers are wanting to implore the Mercies of God upon the City, and ſo many affronts and defiances are added, to avert all the Powers of Heaven from the protection of it. But now the divine Revelation aſſures us, that our humble Supplications and correſpondent Manners are neceſſary to render the Holy God propitious to us. We therefore juſtly conclude, That a City muſt needs be in the way of Deſtruction, whoſe Inhabitants are averſe to their Prayers, and audacious in their Blaſphemies. And thus much may ſuffice for the demonſtration of *Solomon*'s maxim, *That by the bleſſing of the Righteous the City is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the Wicked.*

AND if this be well demonſtrated, 'tis a fair warning to all Cities which are concerned for their own preſervation, that they be very careful to encreaſe the upright, and diminiſh the number of the wicked among them. That they be very ready upon all Occaſions to embrace the one, and teſtify a neglect and averſion to the other.

THIS is very juſt and upright dealing. For who will dare to condemn the Conduct of any maſter of a Family, who will not throw open his houſe to Robbers, nor permit his Domeſticks to converſe with thoſe who are infected with the Peſtilence? And ſuch is every impious man to the City and Society where he dwells. He robs them of the Mercies of God; he brings the infection of a Curſe into their Habitations. I have often wondered that the conſiderate and governing part of mankind, ſhould be ſo negligent of their own

own ſecurity, and ſo eaſy to partake of other mens ſins, as to ſuffer their dependents and inferiors to involve them in the wrath, and ſubject them to the judgments of God, for want of a Spirit to exert their Zeal for his Glory, and be the Executioners of his juſt vengeance in correcting ſuch profligate Wretches. Shall God ſo loudly proclaim, as he has done in his word, his diſpleaſure againſt all Unrighteouſneſs and Impiety of men; and ſhall thoſe whom he has inveſted with his own Authority, *to be a terror to evil-doers, and a praiſe to them that do well*, ſhall they be afraid to exerciſe this Authority in the vindication of his Honour and Glory? Then ſurely *Faith and Truth are periſhed from among the Children of men*; and God will be glorified in the Deſtruction, rather than the Pardon of ſuch rebellious Creatures. Whatever ſchemes of the divine Mercy ſome men may draw in their own imaginations, 'tis certainly no diminution of the Goodneſs of God, but rather a vindication of his Truth and Juſtice, that in Epidemic corruptions he will not ſpare, but viſits publick Enormities with publick Scourges.

WE have clearly ſeen the different effects of our Obedience or Diſobedience to the divine Commands: That from Truth reſults Proſperity, and from Falſehood and Impiety the worſt of Calamities, not only to ourſelves, but to all our Neighbours and Dependents. This is a threefold Cord, which is not eaſily broken. If we have any tender concern for our ſelves, and our preſent Friends, or for our future and remote Poſterity, we ſhall delight in maintaining the truths of God, and be vigilant to reform, or at leaſt to ſtop the mouth of the wicked. Let not others involve us in the guilt of their ſins, and carry us away with the

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notion of a falſe modeſty or civility to connive at thoſe diſhonours of God, which it is our place and buſineſs to correct. By ſuch connivance we betray our want of diſcretion, in the greateſt diſſervice to the Offenders, to ourſelves, and to all that are about us; we ſuffer ſins to grow upon them, and to pull down the Judgments of God upon their and our own heads; which many times might be prevented, by due and ſpeedy reſtraints of ſuch provocations.

LET us then, as many of us as have any Authority or Power, exert it upon all juſt occaſions, in the cauſe of Truth, to the extermination of all that is contrary to it: So ſhall we both entitle our ſelves and thoſe whom we ſhall reduce from error, to the gracious Protection of God in this life preſent, and to his everlaſting Salvation in that which is to come, through the merits of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord; To whom, &c.

SER-

SERMON XCVI.

On the Twenty-third Sunday *after* TRINITY.

EVENING.

PROVERBS xii. 1.

Whoſo loveth inſtruction, loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof, is brutiſh.

MANIFOLD are the arguments which the royal Preacher uſeth, to engage our attention to the precepts and wiſe counſels which are written in this Book. The firſt is, the advantage which ſuch precepts are of, to improve a man's carriage and converſation. *They ſhall*, ſays he, *be an ornament of grace to thy head, and chains about thy neck.* The richeſt attire which can be laid upon the body, renders it not ſo amiable, as Manners formed upon the rules of wiſdom and virtue. *Secondly*, They are a ſafeguard againſt the miſchiefs of evil company. *From the wicked man*, ſays he, *and from the ſtrange woman, who rejoyce to do evil, and forſake the covenant of God, diſcretion ſhall preſerve thee, underſtanding ſhall keep thee. Thirdly*, They are the beſt preſervatives of health and long life, becauſe a wiſe man lives by the rules of temperance, ſoberneſs and chaſtity, and by his piety keeps under the defence of the

moſt High, and the ſhadow of the Almighty, who protects him from thoſe evil accidents to which he is expoſed by the frailty of his nature, and the malice of his enemies ghoſtly and bodily. *Fourthly*, In the ways of Wiſdom is to be found peace with God, with man, and with our own conſcience, the trueſt enjoyment of the good things of this life, and a ſure and certain hope of that which is to come. *Upright men*, ſays our great Oracle, *ſhall dwell in the land, and the perfect ſhall remain in it.* They that ſtudy ſincerely to pleaſe God, ſhall peaceably enjoy what they poſſeſs, and ſhall leave it to their poſterity after them. 'They ſhall find favour and good underſtanding in 'the ſight of God and man. For the merchandiſe, 'or profit of wiſdom, is more advantageous than that 'of ſilver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She 'is more precious than rubies, and all the things that 'can be deſired, are not to be compared to her. 'Length of days is in her right hand; and in her 'left hand, riches and honour. Her ways are ways 'of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace. She is 'a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; and 'happy is every one that retaineth her.'

SUCH are the arguments and reaſons (weighty ones indeed) which *Solomon* urges, to perſuade us to hearken to his precepts of Wiſdom.

BUT yet he tells us, there are ſeveral ſorts of men, who will be never the wiſer nor better for what he ſays. And they are,

Firſt, SUCH as are ſtupid, and have no palate to reliſh any thing but ſenſual earthly pleaſures. People of this claſs (and they are very numerous) think and act as if they were all fleſh and no ſpirit. They are like the horſe and mule which have no underſtanding.

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They muſt be governed with the whip and rod of correction. Good counſels and inſtructions are but thrown away upon them. *Speak not in the ears of ſuch a fooliſh man*, ſays *Solomon*, *for he will deſpiſe the wiſdom of your words*. Let your diſcourſe be never ſo ingenious or inſtructive, it is but like ſinging to the deaf, or offering colours to the blind; he has no faculty to perceive it. The price of wiſdom is of no uſe to him; tho' it be in his hand, he has no heart to make the purchaſe. Tho' you ſhould bray him in a mortar with a peſtle, yet will not his fooliſhneſs depart from him.

Secondly, THE froward man, who is under the dominion of his luſts and paſſions, benefits not by the precepts of Wiſdom. *Every one*, ſays our Maſter, *that is of a froward heart, is an abomination to the Lord:* He will walk in his own ways, and do that which ſeems good in his own ſight, tho' God ſhould thunder from Heaven, or ſend one from the dead to convert him.

IF his delight be in ſtrife and contention, 'tis no check upon him to hear from God's word, that the meaſure which he metes to others, ſhall be meaſured to him again; he goes on notwithſtanding to ſow the ſeeds of diſſenſion among thoſe who would live peaceably, and to ſeparate the deareſt friends by his backbiting and whiſpering, if they will give ear to his falſe ſtories. Or if his appetites be ſtrongly turned to luxury and lewdneſs, he is not at all moved, tho' he ſees *Solomon* pointing at him as an ox going to the ſlaughter, or a fool to the correction of the ſtocks. Briefly, if anger be his reigning paſſion, he ſeldom grows more mild and gentle by hearing our Preacher diſcourſe upon theſe topicks, That the diſcretion of a man deferreth his anger, and that it is his glory to

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paſs over a tranſgreſſion: That the more underſtanding any man hath, the ſlower he is to be enflamed with this paſſion, which is no where indulged but in the boſom of fools; and that the greater his ſpirit is, the leſs apt is he to be provoked, or to avenge himſelf on thoſe who have happened to offend him. It affects him not to hear our wiſe King paſs a ſentence of excommunication upon him, in charging his young ſtudent in divine philoſophy thus, *Prov.* xxii. 24, 25. *Make no friendſhip with an angry man, and with a furious man you ſhall not go: Leſt you learn his ways, and get a ſnare to your ſoul.* 'It will be a very difficult task for 'you to preſerve your temper, when your paſſionate 'friend is under a commotion; and that being his 'natural humour, may very frequently happen, and 'bring you into danger of your life, both with him-'ſelf, and with others againſt whom he may engage 'you in his quarrels. Therefore contract no friend-'ſhip with cholerick and froward men.'

Thirdly, THE proud conceited man will be no proficient in *Solomon*'s ſchool of wiſdom. *Seeſt thou*, ſays he, xxvi. 12. *a man wiſe in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool, a meer ideot, than of ſuch a man.* For he is wiſer in his own conceit, than ſeven men that can render a reaſon, or give a good anſwer to any queſtion that is propoſed to them. This conceit is commonly the child of proſperity. When a man of an ordinary capacity has proved ſucceſsful in his affairs ſo as to be grown rich, he is apt to impute his ſucceſs to his own abilities, and to fancy himſelf as much ſuperior to others in wiſdom as in wealth. And how high ſuch men often carry it, above ſacred Ordinances, above the Prophet, the Prieſt, and even the Son of God himſelf, is too well known; for they themſelves

themſelves proclaim it by their own behaviour. But he that will fear the Lord, and depart from evil, muſt begin with this leſſon of humility, *not to be wiſe in his own eyes.*

Fourthly, THE negligent and ſlothful man grows never the wiſer under the means of wiſdom. *The idle ſoul*, ſays *Solomon*, *ſhall ſuffer hunger:* He means it of bodily wants, but it is no leſs true in the ſpiritual ſenſe. For the gifts of the mind, as well as thoſe of the body and eſtate, are the rewards of ſtudy and labour. Therefore he tells his candidate of wiſdom, that *he muſt dig for her as for ſilver, and ſearch for her as for hid treaſure.* He muſt incline his ear, and apply his heart very ſeriouſly for the obtaining of her; he muſt ſeek to God and man, and thankfully embrace all thoſe means which are afforded him, to get wiſdom. If he refuſe the means, he ſhall never attain the end. But as he who neglects to plow and ſow his land, ſhall have no harveſt of it: So he that will not be at the pains to cultivate his mind with the inſtructions of wiſdom, ſhall be ſure to have it over-run with the ill weeds of ignorance, folly and vanity.

Fifthly, MEN of a vain and frothy ſpirit, who love to turn ſerious things into ridicule, are unprofitable hearers of the precepts of wiſdom. There was ſuch a generation of fools in *Solomon*'s days, who, inſtead of repenting, made a jeſt of their ſins: And there were multitudes of ſcorners, who pretended to ſeek Wiſdom, but never deſired to find it; for their buſineſs was only to cavil at the precepts of it; to give them a wrong turn, to depreciate them, and make them of no eſteem or moment in the world. Hence it is, that Wiſdom is introduced at the beginning of this Book, exclaiming againſt theſe wretches, *How long,*

long, ye ſcorners, will ye delight in ſcorning? Where lies the pleaſure of ſcoffing at Religion and Virtue, that ye will never give it over? Is any of you ſo wiſe, that he wants no Monitor? Or is ignorance ſo laudable, that a man ſhould hate thoſe who would inform him better? But let them alone, ſays Wiſdom to her teachers, caſt not away your pains upon ſuch unworthy objects. They will not hear your reproofs; they will but hate you for them. A prophane man, who makes a mock of God and Religion, loves not to reaſon with himſelf about ſuch matters, and hates thoſe that reprove him: which makes him avoid religious Aſſemblies, for fear of hearing ſuch reprehenſions as are juſtly due to him. Let him be puniſhed as he deſerves, that others whom he hath deluded, may be awakened to greater circumſpection. Let him be caſt out of the ſociety of men, and then the conteſts which he is wont to raiſe, will go out together with him. *Judgments are prepared for ſuch ſcorners, and ſtripes for the backs of ſuch fools.*

AND thus we have ſeen *Solomon*'s characters of the ſtupid fool, the froward man, the conceited, ſlothful, ſcornful, vain part of the world, what little hope there is of their profiting by his precepts of wiſdom. He preaches and writes for perſons of a contrary genius, who are ſenſible of their ſpiritual infirmities, and willing to be taught and ſtirred up to their duty; who will pay due attention to the leſſons of Wiſdom, and make a ſerious uſe and application of them. Among all which qualifications our divine Philoſopher moſt earneſtly calls for diligence and attention. Full oft does he mingle his ſacred Inſtructions with addreſſes to his hearers, to apply their hearts and encline their ears to the words of his mouth. *Keep my commandments and live*, Prov. vii. *and my law as the apple*

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of thine eye: Bind them upon thy fingers; write them upon the table of thine heart. Say unto Wiſdom, Thou art my ſiſter, and call Underſtanding thy kinſwoman. 'Do 'not eaſily abſent your ſelf from the ſchool of Wiſ-'dom. And when you are preſent in body, do not 'be abſent in mind; do not abandon your ſelf to drow-'ſineſs, nor give a looſe to your thoughts to wan-'der after other matters, but be as intent upon the 'duties of that place, as if you were bargaining for 'a great eſtate, or receiving a large ſum of money, or 'eating and drinking with a keen appetite: And by 'conſtant application you will find that the oracles of 'Wiſdom will be engraven in your heart and incor-'porated with your affections; they will appear in 'your eſteem as a rich treaſure; they will be health 'to your navel, and marrow to your bones. When 'Wiſdom entreth into your heart, and Knowledge 'grows pleaſant to your ſoul, you will find that they 'will revive and cheer you, when all outward com-'forts fail you. You ſhall go about your affairs in 'ſafety, and with a good courage, as being ſure that 'the providence of God watches over you, and that 'his Word and Spirit direct you, to avoid thoſe 'temptations whereby others are enſnared, and drawn 'into ſin and danger. When you lie down, you ſhall 'not be afraid: Yea, you ſhall lie down, and your 'ſleep ſhall be ſweet. When you retire from the la-'bours of the day to your reſt at night, you ſhall 'review your actions with pleaſure and ſatisfaction, 'becauſe you have governed your ſelf by the laws of 'Wiſdom, and have done nothing to offend God or 'trouble your conſcience. You ſhall not be afraid of 'ſudden alarms, nor of the deſolation of the wicked 'when it cometh: For the Lord ſhall be your con-

'fidence, and ſhall keep your foot from being 'taken.'

BUT it may be demanded, Where were, or where are theſe ſchools of Wiſdom, where diligent hearers may be inſtructed in the Laws of God and a good life? In anſwer to this, *Solomon* aſſures us, that there were ſuch places in his Kingdom. For in the firſt Chapter of this Book, he ſays, *Wiſdom crieth without, ſhe uttereth her voice in the ſtreets; ſhe crieth in the chief places of concourſe, in the gates of the city ſhe uttereth her words.* And in his viii chap. he appeals to all his people for the truth of this, ſaying, *Doth not wiſdom cry, and underſtanding put forth her voice? She ſtandeth in the top of high places, by the way, in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in of the doors.* And to go no farther than the ninth Chapter, it begins to the very ſame purpoſe. *Wiſdom hath built her houſe, ſhe hath hewn out her ſeven pillars. She hath killed her beaſts, ſhe hath mingled her wine, ſhe hath alſo furniſhed her table. She hath ſent forth her maidens, ſhe crieth upon the higheſt places of the city: Whoſo is ſimple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth underſtanding, ſhe ſaith to him, Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.*

BY all which expreſſions methinks *Solomon* doth as it were take us by the hand, and leads us round his Kingdom, and points out to us his Schools and Fountains of Learning, his Prophets and Prieſts, his Wiſemen and Scribes, who were in every City, Town, and Village, where there was any number of People, ready to inſtruct them in the Laws of God, and the precepts of upright and virtuous living. I am ſure the paſſages I have mentioned give us a lively idea of

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our own proviſions of this kind. The wiſdom which hath appeared amongſt us, I mean our Chriſtian Religion, is daily crying to us in innumerable places; in our houſes, by the means of religious Books; in our Schools of Literature; but above all, in our Churches, which are the moſt conſtant and regular fountains of this wiſdom.

FOR tho' we ſhould not be able to ſay, that in all our preaching the voice of Wiſdom may be heard to the beſt advantage (tho' I hope and am perſuaded, that office is no where ſo unhappily performed, but that a modeſt and well-diſpoſed hearer may be the wiſer and better for it) yet ſo much of the pure word of God is to be found in the reſt of the publick Ordinances, that by a due attendance upon them a man cannot fail to become well inſtructed in the precepts of wiſdom; and upon this account theſe places deſerve to be called her Thrones, and to be honoured and frequented of all her children.

HE that makes it a matter of duty and conſcience to worſhip God in his publick Ordinances, upon his own day at leaſt, if he cannot find other opportunities for it, will gradually enrich his mind, and enlarge his underſtanding with the beſt notions of the Majeſty of God, and the Dignity of his own Soul; and his pleaſure and ſatisfaction in ſuch notions will daily encreaſe with them: *Whoſo loveth the inſtructions of wiſdom, will proportionably love the knowledge which reſults from them.*

THIS propoſition is convertible thus: *Whoſo is a ſincere lover of knowledge, will be glad to receive thoſe inſtructions* which are neceſſary to bring him to it, whatever time and pains they may coſt him. The truth of this may be illuſtrated by various inſtances. It is

well known that the rudiments of the moſt ingenious and pleaſant ſciences, are in themſelves harſh and tedious. But notwithſtanding this, he that hath a ſtrong paſſion for the ſcience, let it be Muſick, Aſtronomy, Navigation, *&c.* will undergo the fatigue of learning its rudiments, becauſe he knows that without learning rules, and often practiſing them in imperfect eſſays, he can never attain to be maſter of his art. The caſe is the ſame in religious Matters; tho' they were at firſt revealed to mankind by the dictates of the Spirit of God, yet thoſe dictates and revelations muſt now be learned by the ordinary methods of reading and hearing them.

THE human Soul, in its infant ſtate, is like a piece of fair paper; it comes into the world without any thing of the Law of God or man actually written upon it. It has no fountain of wiſdom in it ſelf, but only faculties to apprehend and learn it. And there muſt be a long courſe of education, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little muſt be inſtilled upon the mind, before it can be duly repleniſhed both with the knowledge and the love of God and of his holy Laws.

AND when men are got above the claſſes of infancy and childhood in the School of Wiſdom, yet they muſt never think themſelves above the inſtructions of it. For whoever conceits himſelf maſter of ſo much knowledge as to have no farther occaſion for the doctrines, the reproofs, the corrections, the exhortations of ſacred Writ, certain it is that *ſuch a man knows nothing yet as he ought to know.* He ought to know that he would loſe the perfection of any art or ſcience, by the diſuſe and neglect of it; and by breaking off his acquaintance with his friends, removing from

from his old habitation, changing his former ways and manners of life, he loſes the pleaſure which he once took in ſuch converſations and cuſtoms. But be this as it will: Conſtancy in religious Communion is more neceſſary than in any human ſcience or way of life, becauſe it is the proper food of the Soul, whereby it is nouriſhed unto every good word and work; and it is its only preſervative againſt the temptations of the World and the luſts of the Fleſh, which lie in wait to take it in a defenceleſs condition, and ſpoil it of its virtue. This caſe is aptly illuſtrated by the ancient parable of the theatre of *Orpheus* the *Thracian* Poet, of whom it is fabled, 'That by his wonderful skill 'in muſick, he allured into his theatre all ſorts of 'birds and beaſts of prey, who forgetting their na-'tural appetites and enmities to one another, ſtood 'ſociably together, liſtening to the melody of his 'harp. But when the ſound thereof ceaſed, or was 'drowned by ſome louder noiſe, preſently theſe crea-'tures fell into confuſion and quarrels, till they were 'appeaſed by hearing it again.' Such is the nature and condition of men, whoſe minds are diſordered with various unſociable luſts and paſſions; which yet are kept in ſubjection, ſo long as they give ear to the counſels of Wiſdom, to the exhortations of Religion, to the commands of good Laws and Magiſtrates. But if theſe inſtruments be once ſilent, or are over-born with the din of blaſphemy, ſedition or faction, wild paſſions break looſe, and ſocieties fall into anarchy and confuſion.

I conclude therefore from the authority of my Text, and the reſolutions of other wiſe men, and indeed from the voice of common ſenſe and reaſon, that whoſo loveth not the inſtructions of any ſcience, can

never love the ſcience it ſelf, ſo well as to become maſter of it and to practiſe it. It is as abſurd to pretend to it, as it is to deſire the attainment of any end, without making uſe of the means which lead to it. It is to expect and hope for ſuch ſcience as the immediate gift of God, who is indeed able to give whatever he pleaſes, and can inſtantly infuſe any ſort of knowledge into the mind of man. But this he hath no where promiſed to do. On the contrary, he hath commanded us to ſtudy and take pains, to read, hear, and pray, and attend upon the miniſtry of his word for the acquiring of divine Wiſdom. And we ſee by daily obſervation, that ſuch pains and method of receiving inſtruction is the only way to purchaſe it. In order to make an eſtimate of the reaſon of this, let us ſtate a compariſon between the man who is regular in the duties of this place, and one who neglects them. Now it is very poſſible that the negligent man, by moderate pains in reading, and the benefit of converſation, may have a general knowledge of holy Scripture, and of the duties of a Chriſtian life. But then this knowledge lies dormant in his mind, and does not operate in his words and actions. And indeed how can it? when by his neglects of the worſhip of God, he betrays his want of the firſt and fundamental principle of wiſdom, which is, the fear of the Lord.

ON the other hand, the man who frequents God's houſe with that zeal and devotion which *Solomon* requires in his ſtudent of wiſdom, is continually hearing thoſe ſacred Oracles which contain a true revelation of the divine Majeſty, of his Will and Pleaſure, of his Omniſcience and Omnipotence in the government of the World, and of the rewards and puniſhments which

which he has prepared for mankind in a future ſtate. By theſe Oracles his affections are excited to the love and fear of God, his memory is refreſhed with the hearing of his duty, and his conſcience is awakened with a ſenſe of the importance of it. Briefly, the Spirit of God, which always accompanies the worthy uſe of his Ordinances, deſcends upon him, dwells in him, ſanctifies and regenerates him, becomes his comforter and guide, and makes it his meat and drink to do the will of God.

IF no more were required of us, than to furniſh our heads with religious Speculations, we might then ſoon take our leave of the ſchools of Wiſdom. But all writers of Religion and Morality will tell us, that our duties conſiſt not ſo much in theory as practice. And how much we want to be inſtructed in the plaineſt duties of life, before we are ready and perfect in the practice of them, I ſhall ſhow by one inſtance taken out of this xii chap. of *Proverbs*, concerning the government of the tongue. *There is*, ſays he, *one that ſpeaketh like the piercings of a ſword*; who outrages others, wounds their reputation, ſows diſcord and diviſion amongſt neighbours. *The lip of truth ſhall be eſtabliſhed for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment. Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal uprightly are his delight.* Theſe rules are ſo reaſonable, that every man, at firſt hearing, muſt approve of them. But how little does a meer approbation of them conduce to mend the faults here condemned? But when the offender hears them ſolemnly inculcated in the houſe of God, they fix in his memory, and ſtrike his conſcience with a fear of tranſgreſſing. The like good effects in abundance of other caſes, are known to be wrought by the inſtructions of this place. He

that loves theſe inſtructions, loves to be taught his duty, and to hear ſin reproved, that he may ſee it, and avoid it.

LET but men accuſtom themſelves to a regular attendance upon the publick Ordinances, and they will certainly find a much ſtronger influence of the divine Word upon their minds, than by a bare private reading of it. If they ſhould think their attendance uneaſy at firſt, yet the Spirit of Wiſdom which here manifeſts itſelf, will conquer their averſion, and cauſe them to taſte a ſweet delight and comfort in this communion with God.

THE Fathers of our Church, who were perſecuted for their Religion, complained of it as the worſt of their ſufferings, that they were deprived of the holy Scriptures, and denied the benefit of religious Aſſemblies. Let thoſe who diſhonour God, and defraud their Souls of the bread of life, by refuſing it when it is offered, conſider what manner of Spirit they are of.

LET us hear what our bleſſed Lord ſaid to his firſt Diſciples, and in them to us, *Matth.* xiii. 16, 17. *Bleſſed are your eyes, for they ſee, and your ears, for they hear thoſe things which many Prophets and Kings and righteous men have deſired, but have not ſeen and heard.* Let us teſtify our ſenſe of this bleſſing, by thankfully accepting it, and rejoicing in the enjoyment of it. And let us take all opportunities to honour his holy Name and his Word, who hath called us to this ſtate of ſalvation, who hath provided the beſt means for our inſtruction, and who hath filled our land with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the ſea; even *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, to whom, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON XCVII.

On the Twenty-fourth Sunday *after* TRINITY.

MORNING.

PROVERBS xiii. 20.

He that walketh with wiſe Men ſhall be wiſe: but a Companion of Fools ſhall be deſtroyed.

EVERY one muſt juſtify this Proverb at the firſt hearing of it, and allow it to be an excellent rule of Society in every ſtage and condition of Life. The Manners of Men are not formed ſo much by Nature, as by Society and Converſation. Our nature indeed, our conſtitution is the ſoil which is productive of Virtue or Vice. The temperament of the Body, and the inclinations of the Mind, are what we commonly derive from our Parents; and yet the force of education is often ſeen in this, that thoſe who moſt reſemble their Parents in their Features and Diſpoſitions, are by uſe and cuſtom drawn into very different ſentiments and ways of Life. In ſhort, that ſort of People who are moſt converſant with us, make the deepeſt impreſſion of their words and actions upon our Minds, and do in a great meaſure infuſe their own Wills, Opinions, and Affections into

into us. For which reaſon it very much concerns both our preſent and future Happineſs, that a good choice be made of Perſons who ſhall be admitted to a near and intimate converſe with us, eſpecially in the growing Years and Aſcent of Life: For *he that walketh with wiſe Men, ſhall be wiſe: but a companion of Fools ſhall be deſtroyed.*

NOW to walk with wiſe Men, is to converſe with them, and give attention to their inſtructions whether living or dead. But how can we converſe with the Dead? even by their Books which they have written and left behind them. And this makes my Text a very practicable Rule: for perhaps it would be difficult for the younger ſort in every place to meet with a proper Guide, whoſe quality, age, or imployment could admit them to have free acceſs to him upon all occaſions. But by the help of good Books of an eaſy purchaſe, the meaneſt of us, who has leaſt acquaintance in the World, and if he had more, wants proper times and ſeaſons to cultivate it, may at his own leiſure hours retire, and converſe with the very wiſeſt and beſt Men that ever lived upon Earth. By the help of Sacred Scriptures, we can be familiarly acquainted not only with this royal Sage, the Author of my Text, but alſo with *Moſes* and the Prophets, with Chriſt and his Apoſtles, who being all departed out of this Life, yet continue to ſpeak to us by their written Sermons and Diſcourſes, as plainly as they did to the People of their own times. So that there is no neceſſary Maxim of Faith or Manners which they ever uttered, but what we have the benefit of by this way of Conveyance; and if we do but apply our Hearts to the learning of them, and regulate our lives by theſe Maxims, we may very truly be

be ſaid to walk with all theſe wiſe Men. Our ſtudying of them in order to tranſcribe them into our Practice, is the very beſt way of walking with them.

AND by walking with wiſe Men, *i. e.* by delighting in their perſonal Converſation if living, or their Writings if dead, a young Man will become wiſe, he will take pleaſure in the ways and ſtudies of theſe Men; he will grow to be a maſter of their Knowledge, and a partaker of their Spirit, Genius and Affections. This is a neceſſary Conſequence, not only in religious, political, and moral Concerns, but in every Art or Science, Liberal or Mechanick. He who by a ſtrong inclination is led to read the Books and converſe with the Maſters of Rhetorick, Muſick or Mathematicks, will himſelf become a good Orator, Muſician, or Mathematician. Thus we learn to ſpeak any Language, or perform any manual Operation, by giving up our ſelves to the directions of thoſe who are expert in them, and ſhew us the way how to attain them. It very rarely happens that a Perſon is ſo happy as to be ſelf-taught, to learn any Art or Science without the aſſiſtance of a Maſter. Even though he has the uſe of Books, he is many times at a loſs for the explanation of ſeveral paſſages in them. Like the *Ethiopian* Eunuch, he cannot often underſtand what he readeth, except he have ſome Man to guide him. This ſhows the great dignity of ſuch as are excellent in any part of divine or human Learning. They are not only valuable for the ſervice they do in the exerciſe of their own Talent, but likewiſe for their dexterity in communicating it, and multiplying it in the Hands of others, ſo as to beget many Sons of the like uſeful Occupation. *He that walketh with wiſe Men, ſhall be wiſe.*

BUT

BUT a Companion of Fools ſhall be deſtroyed. This is oppoſed to the former branch of the Text, according to the common ſtyle of theſe Proverbs, and agreeable to a known Rule, That *contraries placed together in one view, do moſt notably illuſtrate each other.* And ſo it follows here, that if he that delights in the Society of wiſe men, muſt needs learn wiſdom of them, then he who chuſes the company of wicked Men and Fools, will as ſurely be infected with their Impieties and Follies. The ground of this conſequence is the ſame as before, That *the Members of any Society act by Imitation, and commonly partake of one another's Manners.*

IT is well known, that in this Book of Proverbs, the word *Folly* commonly denotes all kind of Wickedneſs, which is indeed the greateſt Folly, as naturally involving the actors in the worſt ſort of Miſchief. So that our *Companion of Fools* here may ſignify one that keeps any bad company whatever. And in this general Latitude it may be truly affirmed of ſuch a one, that he purſues his own Deſtruction.

SOME of the Fathers interpret theſe words of thoſe who frequent Masks, Shows, and all kind of idle Amuſements and Buffooneries. And certain it is, that theſe Sports very much tend to turn the head from every thing that is grave and ſerious, filling the Mind with a chaos of wild Imaginations, and ſupplying the Tongue with a perpetual fund of vain, frothy Diſcourſe. We may herein appeal to the obſervation of all Men, whether ever they knew a Man, much addicted to theſe Vanities, to retain any true reliſh for things of a ſolid nature: His ſenſes are ſo vitiated, that the Sacred Scriptures are the ſavour of death to him: his Underſtanding is ſubverted, ſo that he has falſe Ideas and Notions of Things; the true Man

is deſtroyed, and a ſtrange romantick Figure of a Man left in the room of him.

2*dly*, A Companion of Drunkards, Gameſters and Harlots, comes to deſtruction by ways which are too well underſtood; by neglecting his honeſt Imployment, conſuming his Time and his Money, contracting Diſtempers by his Intemperance and Lewdneſs, enflaming his Paſſions, unbridling his Tongue, which throws him into ſudden Frays and Quarrels, wherein he often loſes his Life, and together with it, all eſteem and reputation in this World, and all hopes of happineſs in that which is to come. There is a peculiar ſignification in the word which we here render *deſtroyed*; the original moſt properly ſignifies *broken*; and this is moſt emphatically verified of ſuch vain, intemperate, lewd Companions as I have been deſcribing. They break their Health and vigorous Conſtitutions; they break their credit and good character in the World; they break in their Trade, Eſtate, and Fortune; they break their Families and many other Dependents, and by devouring the Subſtance which they ſhould live upon, reduce them to Hunger and Nakedneſs, ſcatter them about among the corrupt parts of the World, expoſe them to the danger of taking to bad Courſes, which will bring them to a ſhameful end, or at leaſt continue them ſhameful Monuments of their wicked Anceſtors Extravagancies. And thus *a companion of fools is deſtroyed and broken.*

3*dly*, A companion of Atheiſts is a companion of Fools, *i. e. of ſuch as ſay in their Heart, there is no God, and corrupt each other, and talk of wicked Blaſphemy.* He learns of ſuch Fools to think himſelf wiſer than all the World, by diſputing againſt the Word

Word of God, and deſpiſing thoſe religious Duties which he requires of us, which the wiſeſt and beſt of Men have always believed, and eſteemed it their greateſt Wiſdom to reverence and practiſe. For it is well known that the pious Man for the moſt part reaps the Bleſſings of the preſent Life, as well as of that which is to come; and that in conſequence of the Promiſes of God, who is the diſpenſer of them both; and has ſufficiently made himſelf known in the World by his Mercies to the Righteous, and his Judgments upon Sinners: and though ſometimes he permits one event of Good or Evil indifferently to befall them both, as it needs muſt, when their intereſts are combined, yet in other circumſtances he commonly diſtinguiſhes them by marks of his Favour or Diſpleaſure. And therefore the infatuated Companion of Atheiſts unhappily makes Shipwreck of all his Bleſſings temporal and eternal. For of his abandoned Maſters he learns to caſt away the Fear of God, and Reverence for holy things, to neglect thoſe Prayers and acts of religious Worſhip which God has inſtituted as means of Grace, to break thoſe divine Laws, in the obſervance of which alone we can hope for the Preſence of God with us, and his Protection of us againſt thoſe Evils, ghoſtly and bodily, which continually ſurround us. All which rewards and advantages that Man forfeits for himſelf, and many times for his whole Family, and late Poſterity, *who delights to make his abode in the tents of the ungodly, who ſtands in the way of Sinners, and ſits in the ſeat of the Scorner.*

AND this may ſuffice to expoſe the Folly of thoſe young Perſons who liſt themſelves in the Society of atheiſtical Men, and learn of them to blaſpheme God,

and

and prophane his Sabbaths; whereby they put themſelves out of his Protection, and bring down his curſe both upon themſelves and their Dependents.

NOW from this Text of the royal Preacher, and theſe Meditations which we have raiſed upon it, we may deduce theſe following Inferences.

1*ſt*, THAT it is our wiſeſt and beſt courſe to accuſtom ourſelves early to a due attendance at the houſe and worſhip of God: For there we ſhall be ſure to have the company of Wiſe men. All they are ſuch, who conſcientiouſly perform the duties of this place. Of ſuch we ſhall learn Wiſdom; we ſhall be animated by them to a godly Zeal, Reverence, and Devotion in the ſeveral parts of our Worſhip; and if we fall into farther acquaintance with them, we ſhall profit by their good Counſels and Converſation. In this place we are ſure to have the bleſſed fellowſhip of the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apoſtles, who in their ſeveral turns ſpeak to us and inſtruct us by the mouth of the Miniſter, as they were inſpired by the Holy Spirit of God.

AND where can we find, on this ſide Heaven, ſuch an Aſſembly of men, moſt famous in their Generations for Sanctity and Wiſdom, and honoured with manifold teſtimonies of God himſelf, that they walked with him and pleaſed him? In this place therefore we walk with them, and with their and our God, who has aſſured us that he is in the midſt of ſuch an Aſſembly, ready to give all good Gifts, eſpecially the Spirit of Wiſdom, to all them who ſhall faithfully ask it of him.

2*dly*, OUR next Wiſdom will be, when we are abroad in the World, to avoid the Converſation of all ungodly and vitious Men; I don't mean, that we ſhould

ſhould have no commerce or dealing with them; *for then*, as St. *Paul* ſays, *we muſt go out of the World*; becauſe it ſo abounds with People of theſe Characters, that if we have any worldly concerns, we muſt often be concerned with ſome of them. But I ſay, we muſt not contract any intimate familiarity or friendſhip with them, ſo as to run with them into their wicked Courſes; for thereby we ſhall confirm them in their ſins, and violate at leaſt, if not quite deſtroy our own Virtue. The royal Preacher, who knew the force of ſinful Temptations, cautions us abundantly, in the name of all that is wiſe and prudent, to keep at a diſtance, and not come within the verge of their Influence: not to hear them, if we can help it; but if we cannot avoid hearing, yet to turn away, and run from them as faſt as we can, before they operate upon our Affections. He tells us that the young man whom he ſaw enticed and over-perſuaded by a ſtrange Woman, when he was once entred into her Houſe, had no more power to reſcue himſelf, than *an Ox which is led to the Slaughter, or a Fool to the correction of the Stocks*. He gives us repeated warnings not to accept of the Preſents or Entertainments of Robbers, to lay ourſelves under no Obligations to Atheiſtical or Luſtful men, becauſe by ſo doing we may be drawn into their Acquaintance and their wicked ways. And if we once begin, we know not where to ſtop, nor what may be the iſſue. Many a man has loſt his Life in a drunken fit, who ſate down with a reſolution to drink but little; and many another has thrown away his Eſtate in gaming, who at firſt could not be perſuaded to hazard more than a trifle. And I doubt not but ſome who have been brought by Atheiſtical Company to give a Bill of Divorcement to their Religion,

Religion, had once ſuch an opinion of their own firmneſs, that they thought nothing could move them, till by the juſt Judgment of God upon them, for aſſociating themſelves with his Enemies, they have been deſerted by his Spirit, and delighted to hear thoſe Blaſphemies which they once abhorr'd. This deſerves our moſt ſerious regard; and therefore I would farther inculcate it upon you, that when we begin to affect ill Company, we joyn in Confederacy with the Powers of Darkneſs againſt all that is good; and this is the cauſe why God is ſo offended with us, that he often gives us up to a reprobate mind, to run on from beginnings which we think ſmall and innocent, till we end in the Deſtruction both of Body and Soul.

3*dly*, SINCE Wiſdom is learned by Society and Converſation, eſpecially in tender years, this ſhould admoniſh all Parents, who have any regard for the welfare of their Children, to be frequently inſtilling good Inſtructions into them, and to enforce them with ſuch Examples, as they would not be ſorry nor aſhamed to ſee their Children imitate. There are the moſt ſacred and ſolemn Injunctions laid upon Children to honour their Parents; and therefore it highly concerns Parents to take heed what Counſels they give their Children, and what Ways they teach them. And though it be no where made a part of Childrens Obedience to imitate their Parents, any farther than as their Actions and Ways are pleaſing to God; yet we ſee Children are very apt to tread in their Fathers ſteps. So that if the Father were a Drunkard, a Blaſphemer, a Sabbath-breaker, a general Deſpiſer of religious Duties, the Child is but too prone to vouch his Authority, at leaſt in his own mind, for doing the ſame things. And too ſeldom it is that you ſee the

Son fill that Seat in the Church, which his Father before him commonly left empty. And on the contrary, thoſe Children generally continue their good Affections to Religion in their Family, who have been train'd up to it by the Nurture, Admonition, and good Example of their Parents.

IN the next place, ſince Company and Example have ſuch an influence to form and change our manners to better or worſe, Parents ſhould be very careful, when they ſend their Children abroad, to place them in ſuch Families as are Orthodox in their Religion, and virtuous in their Converſation, and where the Maſter is truly diligent to reſtrain all his Dependents from a licentious gadding abroad, and running into promiſcuous Company at ſpare times, eſpecially on the Lord's day: For without this vigilant care, Children of the beſt Parents may ſoon be corrupted through the negligence or ill example of their Maſters, and receive ſuch harm in their Morals, as all the advantages of any Art or Science which they learn, can never be able to compenſate.

AND therefore Parents, though perhaps not intentionally, are however in fact, Enemies to their Children, who in placing them abroad, chiefly conſult their temporal Intereſts, and have not the firſt and principal regard to the Piety and Virtue of their enſuing Lives. And the like conſideration ought to be had in Marriages, where the Portion or Eſtate ſhould not ſo much induce us to contract affinity, as the ſincere Piety and Virtue which has been long eſtabliſhed and flouriſhed in the Family. For however either party may ſhift for themſelves, yet what Service can be done for Poſterity, if either he or ſhe be unequally yoked with an Atheiſt, a Libertine, a Perſon

Perſon alienated from the love and fear of God, and ſtrongly addicted to the purſuit of ſinful pleaſures? Such unhappy Companions of Fools are in great danger to be deſtroy'd both in their own Perſons and their Poſterity, in all their ſubſtantial Felicities, Temporal and Eternal.

ST. *Paul*, I confeſs, expreſſes good hopes, that in caſes of Chriſtians marrying with Infidels, the Chriſtian Wife might win the Husband, or the Chriſtian Husband might reconcile the Wife to the Faith of Chriſt. But this he ſays, not to encourage ſuch matches, but to prevent the ſeparation of the Parties ſo matcht already: That they ſhould continue together in their Married ſtate, and labour after and hope for ſuch good fruits of it. But the unmarried Chriſtians he counſels to match with none but thoſe of their own Religion. He knew it was too great a venture for them to run the hazard of being perverted, and the difficulty of well-ordering their Families and educating their Children in ſuch unſuitable matches. And the Objection is as ſtrong now againſt marrying with any Perſon of diſſolute Principles or Morals: the impediments of comfortable and holy living in ſuch a ſtate are much the ſame.

WE cannot but know, if we obſerve any thing of the bent and propenſion of our own nature, that we are too apt to ſtrike out of the paths of true Wiſdom, and loſe ourſelves in the errors and by-ways of ſinful Temptations. We have therefore the more need to fortify ourſelves with wiſe Counſellors and faithful Monitors, whoſe virtuous converſation and upright walking with us may be a conſtant biaſs upon us, to with-hold us from evil, and encline our Hearts to that which is good.

ABOVE all, let us not fail to acquaint ourſelves with thoſe greateſt Maſters of divine Wiſdom, the Sacred Pen-men of the word of God; of whom we ſhall be ſure to be taught ſuch Precepts as will make us wiſe unto Salvation. In order to which, let us faithfully attend on the duties of this place, which is the houſe of our Heavenly Father, the Habitation which he hath pitched among men. Where he manifeſts himſelf to his obedient Children, and pours out upon them his Heavenly Gifts and Graces, in the Goſpel of his Bleſſed Son, and the Communion of his Holy Spirit; to whom, three Perſons and one God, be all Honour and Glory World without end.

SERMON XCVIII.

On the Twenty-fourth Sunday *after* TRINITY.

EVENING.

PROVERBS xiv. 13.

Even in laughter the heart is ſorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heavineſs.

ALL Philoſophers, I think, are agreed, that the faculty of laughing is peculiar to mankind, as flowing from a principle of reaſon which is wanting in other creatures. And ſo long as this faculty is exerciſed according to the Laws of good ſenſe and reaſon, it is very commendable: For it was given us to ſweeten converſation, to teſtify our eaſineſs in the company of our friends, our kind acceptance of their entertainment, and the pleaſure we take in their diſcourſe and ſociety. The Author of my Text, in his Book of *Eccleſiaſtes*, iii. 4. allows, that *there is a time to laugh as well as a time to weep.* The ſeaſons for both are eaſily ſeen by perſons of good diſcretion. In general we may ſay, that cheerfulneſs is fitteſt for ſociety, and ſadneſs for retirement; according as our

Lord directs in his rule of private faſting, *When thou faſteſt, anoint thy head, and waſh thy face, that thou appear not unto men to faſt.* And this rule may be extended to moſt caſes of perſonal ſorrow and affliction.

LAUGHING is not only a natural ſign of cheerfulneſs, but ſometimes of ſcorn and indignation, of which there are proper objects and occaſions. Our royal Preacher, who was too wiſe and pious to miſrepreſent the Divine Majeſty, aſſures us, *Prov.* iii. 34. that *he ſcorneth the ſcorners*, thoſe impious ſcoffers at religion and virtue, ſo often exclaimed againſt in this Book of *Proverbs*; and particularly threatned in thoſe remarkable words, *I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.* Likewiſe holy *David*, in his ſecond *Pſalm*, obſerves, that when the Kings and Rulers of the earth conſpire againſt the Lord and againſt his Church, ſaying, 'Let us break the bonds 'of their religion aſunder, and caſt away the cords 'of their Laws from us; *he that ſitteth in Heaven ſhall laugh them to ſcorn, the Lord ſhall have them in deriſion.* Which expreſſions are uſed for our inſtruction, to excite us, by the authority and example of the moſt High, to treat all blaſphemers of his name and ſcoffers at his worſhip, with the utmoſt contempt and indignation. In which treatment we are juſtified by his conduct who is infinitely good and gracious; yet *ſurely*, ſays *Solomon*, *he ſcorneth the Scorners*, he hath no manner of tenderneſs or favour for them. And therefore while we eſteem them as worthy of regard, we do in effect make ourſelves more righteous than God, and become partakers of other men's ſins.

AND thus much briefly of the right uſes of laughter: I now proceed to note the abuſes of it, according to the direct purport of the words of my Text.

I. Then;

I. Then; AS we may exceed in any innocent pleaſures and diverſions, and thereby render them culpable, ſo may we in this: Which whenever it is exceſſive, it leaves a ſorrowful heart, becauſe it exhauſts thoſe animal ſpirits, which are the neceſſary life and ſupport of it. This may be underſtood better by experience, than it can be by any verbal deſcription. It is generally known that immoderate laughing cauſes a ſinking of the heart, and a dejection of the Spirits, inſomuch that ſome have expired in the very act. Therefore

II. LOUD, frequent, extravagant Laughter ſhould be avoided, becauſe it preys upon the vitals, it is the conſumption of all true joy and peace; it throws the affections into hurry and diſorder, and renders a man incapable of ſolid and ſerious thinking; inſtead of which, it puts him upon hunting after little jeſts and trifling matters, which may ſupply fewel to this abuſed faculty.

SOME there are who affect this perpetual exerciſe of their ſpleen in rallying and jeſting, as fancying that it recommends them for perſons of wit and good humour: But on the contrary, it certainly ſpoils their temper, and makes them difficult, peeviſh, and abuſive in converſation. It betrays a weakneſs and giddineſs of brain, which hath a great mixture of folly and madneſs in it.

FOR Fools and Madmen turn every thing into ridicule; whereas wiſe men are always ſeaſonable in their mirth, and exerciſe it only upon proper occaſions. This is well obſerved by *Plato*, who reprehends the Poet *Homer* for making his Gods act out of character, when he repreſents them as ſetting up a loud laugh at *Vulcan*'s halting; an incident which ſhould not have

moved any man of dignity, much leſs was it worthy the notice of the Gods.

III. THIS kind of mirth is the prize of Libertines; they find it in every luſt which they purſue. But they ſay it is not to be found in religion; and they ſay very true: Religion is a ſtranger to ſuch deluſive joy; which only ſerves to colour vice, to conceal its poiſon with a falſe reliſh, to give the reputation of enjoyments to the pomps and pleaſures of this vain world.

THIS is a warrantable meaning of my Text, and to make it out the plainer, ſome connect it with the foregoing verſe. *There is a way*, ſays he, *which ſeems right to a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.* And why does it ſeem right? but becauſe it is beſtrowed with the flowers of theſe falſe joys. Eating and drinking, muſick and ſinging, dancing and laughing, are the common Sirens which allure poor unwary ſinners into theſe ways, and devour them when they have done. They devour their time and pains, their health and ſtrength, their reputation and good conſcience, their virtue and courage. Their fair faces at laſt turn into foul monſters, and all their endearments are found to be but ſo many nets and ſnares, thrown out to captivate ſilly hearts, and to drag them to deſtruction. *Their ways in the end prove to be the ways of death.*

SOLOMON hath ſet forth the emptineſs of theſe joys by a juſt compariſon: *The Laughter of fools, i. e.* wicked men, *is like the crackling of thorns under a pot*, loud, ſudden, and tranſient; after a glaring blaze, nothing remains but coldneſs and darkneſs. And this the poor Fool ſees, whenever he has the ſmalleſt glimmering of reaſon to ſhew him the true ſtate of his

his mind. Let a man who has ſpent fifty or ſixty years, in the enjoyment of ſenſual pleaſures, take the benefit of ſuch an enlightening, and deſcend into his own heart, and ſee what ſtock of joy he has laid up there for old age, from all the Feaſts, Shows, theatrical Entertainments, amuſements and diverſions which have fallen to his ſhare thro' the courſe of his life. What report will he make, after all his experience? perhaps none at all; perhaps one in favour of ſuch delights. But will you hear the ſentence of one who had tried them, and was capable of paſſing a true judgment upon them? It is our royal Preacher, who pronounces of them more than once, that *they are all vanity and vexation of Spirit.*

HE tells us, *Eccleſ.* ii. that after other ſearches for preſent happineſs, he reſolved to try if he could find it in mirth; and that this afforded nothing but diſappointment. *I ſaid of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doth it?* 'The noiſe, the tumult, the indecent 'motions and ſcurrilous jeſtings of men who give a 'looſe to exceſſive laughter, appeared to me like di-'ſtraction of mind: and conſidering how pernicious 'it is, I could not but reject it with a paſſionate 'diſdain; ſaying of all the branches of faſhionable 'mirth and diverſions, what is there in them, that 'ſo ſtrangely bewitches men? What enchantment 'have they which ſo intoxicates mortals, that they 'think not of God, nor of any thing that is ſerious, 'but are wholly intent upon the purſuit of theſe un-'profitable, theſe hurtful amuſements?'

SUCH was *Solomon*'s experimental judgment of thoſe things which the World calls pleaſures and enjoyments. Whence I conclude, that if a ſuperannuated Epicure, who has loſt the taſte of them, does

not

not give them the ſame character, he does not ſpeak impartially. If he laughs and ſeems to rejoyce at the mention of them, his heart contradicts his tongue, for *it is in the gall of bitterneſs, and the bonds of iniquity.*

AND this leads us to obſerve,

IV. THAT laughter is often abuſed to skreen an evil conſcience, or to ſet a good face upon a bad matter. And this is the common artifice of malefactors: they drink and revel and laugh, as if they were all joy and innocence within; when at the ſame time their conſcience preſents them with the Tribunal, the Accuſers, the Judge, and the Executioner. The Hypocrite, who ſerves the Prince of darkneſs with his diſſimulation, that he may ſeduce others to do things really ſinful, or at leaſt to ſuffer the frauds and cheats which he deſires to paſs upon them, he compoſes the air of his face and his whole carriage to perſonate even an Angel of light, appearing to be very cheerful and good-humoured, as having nothing but upright intentions in his heart; when alas! this ſerenity is but the forerunner of a tempeſt, and this mirth muſt end in the mourning of the deluded ſufferer.

THIS is the melancholy ſtate of our World, that the glories and rejoycings of one part are founded in the deſolation and ruin of another great part of mankind. Such are the triumphs of great Conquerors, the treaſures of Oppreſſors, the ſweet morſels of robbers and fraudulent dealers; they are the ſpoils, the blood, the tears of thoſe unhappy wretches, who by violence or circumvention have been deſtroyed, enſlaved, and reduced to a helpleſs, ſtarving condition.

V. THAT part of laughter which conſiſts in ſcorn and deriſion, how commonly is it imployed to the abuſe of all that is good? I have obſerved before, that

that there are in the World ſome men and their actions which juſtly deſerve to be ſcorned and derided. But I muſt now complain that the reproach which is due to theſe, is, by a monſtrous perverſion, poured out upon God, Religion, and Virtue: Which when profligate men ridicule and hiſs out of the World, what muſt ſuch a generation of vipers expect? and what can be the end of ſuch mirth?

WE have heard of the Fall of Angels, and we know that their enmity to God made them Reprobates. I have read many things which they are reported to have ſaid. But I never found any language of Hell comparable to that which now flows from the tongues and pens of our impious race. Surely the lot is fallen upon Atheiſtical Chriſtians to fill up the meaſure of the infernal blaſphemies, and haſten the conſummation of the Divine Vengeance. The very Devils believe there is a God, and tremble at thoſe things which our Infidels commit in ſport and gayety. To what depth of miſery muſt ſuch a load of provocations ſink our Globe? What a tragical concluſion had the jollity of the old World? No methods of Divine Grace could melt them into tears of repentance; but hardily they perſiſted in ſinning, 'till all nature about them wept ſuch a deluge, as ſwept them (as they deſerved) from the face of the Earth.

AND in this World of ours, how often and how loudly has God called from Heaven (enough to make the deaf to hear) that if Scorners will not leave off their ſcoffing at religion, he will turn their mirth into mourning, and their joy into heavineſs? Yet how does the number of ſuch ſcoffers encreaſe; and what are they bringing upon us but the execution of threatned judgments?

Laſtly,

Laſtly, IT is not good for man to indulge mirth and jollity, becauſe the exceſs of ſuch pleaſures always turns to the greateſt pain. Concerning which we have many excellent admonitions both in divine and human writings. 'Have you found honey? ſays 'Solomon: eat not ſo much as to ſurfeit of it; for then 'it will turn into the bittereſt gall. Have you found 'riches? Set not your heart upon them: for many 'times they get wings, and fly away from their own-'ers, and leave them in that poverty which they 'dreaded above all other conditions. But if they 'ſhould abide by you, yet even ſo they may prove 'your bane: they may ſupply you with the fewel of 'many pernicious luſts: and if you take them into 'your boſom, they will ſting you like a ſerpent with 'endleſs cares and fears. Have you found good wine, 'with agreeable company? Be not too fond of it; 'nor drink it to exceſs, leſt it diveſt you of the man, 'and transform you into a brute. For who hath wo? 'who hath ſorrow? who hath contentions? who hath 'babling? who hath wounds without cauſe? who 'hath redneſs of eyes? They that tarry long at the 'wine, and delight in the ſociety of riotous livers.'

NOW the deſign of all this, is to perſuade us to be moderate in all conditions; and when we are maſters of good things, not to let them become maſters of us. When fortune runs high on our ſide, not to be over-much exalted, but reckon that it will change: When it is againſt us, not to deſpair, but live in hopes that it will come fair again. *In the day of proſperity*, ſays *Solomon*, *be joyful, but in the day of adverſity conſider: God hath ſet the one over-againſt the other, to the end that man ſhould find nothing after him.*

WHEN

WHEN we are in proſperity, let us enjoy God's bleſſings cheerfully and with thankful hearts; but ſo ſoberly as not to forget that afflictions will take their turn; which whenever they come, let us take them patiently, conſidering that they may change for the better. For as both good and evil come from God, ſo hath he balanced them with ſuch exactneſs, that the moſt diſtreſſed wants not proportionable comforts, nor may the happieſt fancy himſelf more than man. In ſhort, we cannot invent a way to diſpoſe things better than God hath done.

SOCRATES, in *Plato*'s *Phedo*, ſays, it would have ſerved *Æſop* for a good ſubject of a Fable, to have repreſented how Pleaſure and Pain contended before *Jupiter*, which ſhould be chief among men; and that the God not being able to decide their quarrel, ſent them into the World like two twins joyned together at the head; ſo that whoever had the one, ſhould be ſure to have the other. And this is ſo conſtantly the courſe of Providence, that both hiſtory and our own experience will ſatisfy us, that it is verified in every condition of Life.

PAIN certainly gives the greateſt reliſh to pleaſures. Thus reſt is moſt pleaſant after travel and labour, health after ſickneſs, and food to a ſtomach which is well whetted with hunger. And it is natural for us to value thoſe things moſt, which have coſt us much ſtudy and watching, and put us to hazards and hardſhips for the obtaining of them.

FOR theſe reaſons, *Solomon* hath ſaid ſeveral things, which ſound like paradoxes at firſt hearing, but upon examination will be found to be the ſoundeſt rules of comfortable living. *It is better*, ſays he, *to go to*

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the houſe of mourning, than to the houſe of feaſting; to converſe with things that will make us ſerious, oftener than with thoſe that are the ſubjects of levity and jeſting. For in the midſt of ſuch feſtivity, we are apt to forget ourſelves and grow diſſolute: But a ſpectacle of mortality inclines us to be conſiderate, and diſpoſes our minds to humility and meekneſs, ſobriety and charity; when, in our deceaſed friend, we ſee the common fate of all men, and follow him to his Grave, who but a little before was perhaps as ſtrong and likely to live as ourſelves; This ſhows us how quickly all our ſenſual joys muſt expire, and warns us, if we would be happy, ſo to live, that death, which is juſtly dreadful to the wicked, may be welcome to us, as being the Gate thro' which we eſcape from all our troubles into eternal reſt.

AND therefore *Solomon* concludes, that *Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the ſadneſs of the countenance the heart is made better:* Which may be underſtood of ſadneſs either in ourſelves or others; by ſeeing it in others, we are affected with it ourſelves, and while it impairs the looks, it improves the mind.

THE heart of the wiſe, proceeds he, *is in the houſe of mourning, while the heart of fools is in the houſe of mirth.* The one is contemplating the vanity of all worldly enjoyments, while the other ſeeks all opportunities to avoid ſuch contemplations, and to put them out of his head. But *it is better to hear the rebuke of wiſe men, than the ſong of fools.* He that will be wiſe, muſt converſe with the wiſe and virtuous, and be content to hear their reproofs; which tho' they may ſound harſh at the firſt, yet are they infinitely preferable to the ſmooth praiſes and commendations of men

men of a contrary character; nay they ought to be more acceptable than the moſt delicious muſick, ſongs, and jeſts of all the merry companions in the World.

OUR royal Preacher had no intention to forbid men the lawful and innocent pleaſures of life: he only ſtudies how to make them real pleaſures, by limiting them within the bounds of innocence, and regulating them by the fear of God and a good conſcience. *Make*, ſays he, *thy ways and works acceptable to God in the firſt place, and then eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart.* And that he may be ſure to be underſtood, he repeats and inculcates this over and over again. *Every man*, ſays he, *Eccleſ.* v. 19. *to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoyce in his labour; this is the gift of God. It is good and comely for a man to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he takes under the Sun, all the days of his life which God giveth him.* But how ſhall he enjoy it? Not by breaking thro' the Laws of religion and virtue, not by pampering his luſts, or ſetting his heart upon riches or honours; but by living in the fear of God, and exerciſing beneficence towards all men. Let him be very thankful to God for all his gifts, and very glad to imploy them to his glory, and the comfort of his poor fellow-creatures, and then he will not think life tedious or irkſome; he will not want to drown his thoughts and ſtupify his conſcience with pleaſures and amuſements: But he will paſs his time moſt agreeably, becauſe it is his meat and drink to do good; and God hath given him his heart's deſire, in that inward

tranquillity

tranquillity of mind, that joy and gladneſs of heart, which the World can neither give him, nor take from him.

SOLOMON adviſes the man who would attain to this cheerful and contented Spirit, to manage his affairs with diligence and prudence, and then not to diſturb himſelf with anxious concern about the iſſues of things, but to leave ſuch cares to God who is the merciful and gracious Protector of all thoſe that put their truſt in him. Let him not build too much upon outward proſperity, but always remember, that as the faireſt Sun that ever ſhone will ſet, and the night will follow it; ſo a life bleſt with all the ſatisfactions of this World, muſt have an end. Let him communicate with his neighbours, according to his ability, in acts of hoſpitality and friendſhip: and let him believe, that nothing is more profitable (tho' the World thinks otherwiſe) than to be kind and charitable to poor, miſerable people, tho' perhaps they are not ſo good as they ſhould be, but will unthankfully forget the benefits they have received; at leaſt, are never likely to make any return, no more than the ſea, or the ſand upon the ſea-ſhore could produce a harveſt for the ſeed ſown upon it. *Yet*, ſays he, *caſt thy bread upon theſe waters, for after many days thou ſhalt find it again.* Let not the probable loſs of it, diſcourage you from diſpenſing it, for God can requite you for it both in this and the next World; he has promiſed to do it in both; and there may come a time when ſome of thoſe poor people who have been relieved by you, may do you good ſervice.

AND by exerciſing the offices of mercy and loving-kindneſs, gentleneſs, patience, and meekneſs, you will

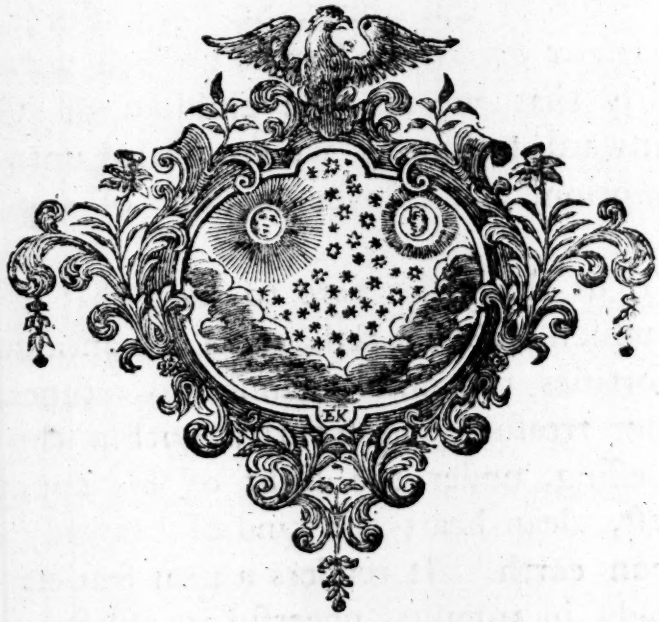
will not fail to obtain the Holy Spirit of God, the Spirit of love, joy, and peace, whoſe fruits they are. And indeed, the influence and communion of this bleſſed Spirit, is the only fountain of all true joy. In the cheerfulneſs that reſults from it, there is no mixture of ſorrow, the mirth of it never ends in heavineſs. The unction or infuſion of it, is ſtyled, *the oyl of joy and gladneſs*. This is that Heavenly Comforter which Chriſt promiſed to ſend down upon his Diſciples; and they fully experienced the truth of his promiſe. For he filled them with ſuch conſolations, ſuch faith, hope, and courage, that they not only took joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods for Chriſt's name, but they ſmiled upon the rack, they ſang Pſalms in the fire, they were all light within, they conſtantly triumphed over all the powers of darkneſs.

BY virtue of this Spirit, St. *Paul* aſſures us, that *we ſhall rejoyce evermore:* For he beareth witneſs with our Spirit that we are the children of God: by which inward teſtimony we are ſealed unto the day of redemption, and rejoyce in hope of approaching glory.

LET us then take care to keep that good conſcience which *Solomon* tells us is a continual feaſt, which fortifies the mind againſt misfortunes, which places our treaſure and ſecurity within the vail of God's bleſſing, under the light of his countenance. An honeſt, clean heart is a kind of heavenly companion upon earth. It renders a man fearleſs in dangers, ſteady in tumults, cheerful in afflictions, meek and compoſed under thoſe accidents which commonly diſorder other men. The Spirit of the World is rude and extravagant in all its paſſions; but that from

Heaven is modeſt, venerable, ſerene, and always quiet in its ſtation.

Laſtly, LET us pray, that this good Spirit may reign in our hearts, and baniſh from thence all noiſom luſts, and vitious affections, that no voice blaſpheming God or outraging men may be heard among us; but that religion and virtue, meekneſs and mercy may dwell in our habitations; which will fit and prepare us for that Jubilee of joy, and thoſe immortal pleaſures which fill the Kingdom of the God of peace and love, thro' the merits of *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, *&c.*



SERMON

SERMON XCIX.

On the Twenty-fifth Sunday *after* TRINITY.

MORNING.

PROVERBS xv. 1.

A ſoft anſwer turneth away Wrath: but grievous words ſtir up Anger.

THE greateſt part of our Converſation conſiſting in Diſcourſe, and words being the moſt ready and eaſy way of expreſſing our thoughts: there are many rules laid down in Holy Writ for the Government of the Tongue, that we be more eſpecially careful not to offend any one by unbecoming or provoking Language; and if any of our Superiors, who has a juſt Authority over us, happens to be diſpleaſed with our conduct, and ſharply reproves us for it, or threatens us with puniſhment; our wiſeſt way in ſuch caſes is, to acknowledge our Offence; and anſwer a Reproof with mild and ſubmiſſive Language: which is moſt likely to mollify the Diſpleaſure of an offended Superior; for *a ſoft anſwer turneth away wrath: but grievous words ſtir up anger.*

NOW there are three Parties, whoſe Wrath it may concern us to appeaſe by mild and ſubmiſſive Language.

I. THE Wrath of God is appeaſed by this means. For he is provoked every day by the crying ſins of an ungodly World, and would quickly break out as a devouring fire upon it, and utterly conſume it: but that there are, and always have been in it, holy and humble men, who have been much given to Prayer; and in their Prayers have made unfeigned Confeſſions of Sin, and cried mightily unto God, that he would not remember nor viſit with his Judgments the Iniquities of the preſent or paſt Generations. Thus the deſtruction of *Iſrael* was prevented by the many humble and devout Addreſſes of *Moſes*; their Captivity was deferred by the Prayers of the Prophets, and their Reſtoration haſtned by the Interceſſions of *Daniel*, and other Holy men. Were not the Almighty pacified and reconciled to us by ſuch humble Supplications, how would the grievous Words, the Imprecations, Blaſphemies and loud Defiances which are thrown out againſt Heaven every day, enflame the anger of God to whet his Sword, and bend his Bow, and pour out all ſorts of Judgments upon a profligate Generation of men? But his *Mercy rejoyceth againſt Judgment*, and his ears are more open to the dutiful invocations of his own Children, than to the impious ſpeeches of the Sons of *Belial*.

THIS power of humble Submiſſion under the hand of God, was well underſtood by the King of *Nineveh*, when he heard that the Divine Decree was gone out againſt him and his People, and but forty days to the dreadful Execution of it. He ſunk down from his Throne, tore off his Robe, covered himſelf with

with Sackcloth and ſate in Aſhes, and cauſed his People to Faſt and Pray, and turn from their ſinful Courſes; whereby God was turned from the fierceneſs of his Anger, and did not execute his threatened Vengeance upon them.

AND what other Remedy is there left us, for the appeaſing of God's Wrath when it burns againſt us? What did holy *Job* do, when his Children had gone about in a Courſe of Feaſting at one another's Houſes? He roſe up early, and offered Burnt-offerings for them, to make an Atonement for any curſing or blaſphemy which might poſſibly have proceeded out of their Mouths. Even ſo, when we have ſpent our days in Mirth and Jollity, and given a looſe to our Tongues to ſay every Thing that may be thought pleaſant and diverting, or that may ſound forth our Anger and Revenge, or be moſt expreſſive of our Pride, Ambition, or any other exorbitant Luſt, without any Regard to the Laws of God or Man; yet in the end we muſt come upon our Knees, and proſtrate ourſelves at the Foot-ſtool of the Divine Majeſty, and be willing to addreſs him with the moſt humble, ſelf-abaſing, ſelf-denying Language, if we will atone for our proud, lewd, atheiſtical Diſcourſes, and divert and diſſipate that Tempeſt of God's Fury which they have ſtirred up.

2*dly*, THE Fury of a troubled Conſcience is allayed by a ſoft Anſwer, *i. e.* by obviating the Terrors of God's Threatenings, with a juſt Diſplay of his infinite Mercies. Every Sinner who has gone through various Scenes of Impiety, and loaded his Conſcience with the Guilt of many habitual Vices, when he once awakes to a due Senſe of his Condition, is often affrighted even to Diſtraction and Deſpair at the ſight

of it. He muſt needs apply to himſelf all the dreadful Threatenings of God to ſuch Men, and imagine that the Divine Juſtice is going to arreſt him every Moment, and commit him to *the Worm which never dies, and the Fire which never ſhall be quenched.* Now while he is thus ſelf-condemned, and unable to bear the Accuſations of his own Conſcience, how comfortable is it to him, if he meet with a ſpiritual Phyſician of a good Temper and ſufficient Abilities, who knows how to handle the Wounds of his Soul gently, and to pour in the Oyl of the infinite Mercies and gracious Promiſes of God to repenting Sinners! who can largely diſplay the Treaſures of God's Love in Chriſt, and powerfully apply his Sacrifice as a full Satisfaction to the Divine Juſtice for the Sins of the whole World; and make deſpairing Sinners hear the bleſſed Voice of their Saviour calling unto them, and ſaying, *Come unto me all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refreſh you; for I came not to call the Righteous but Sinners to Repentance.*

SUCH merciful Anſwers as theſe to a wounded Soul which cries out for a Redeemer, reſcue it from the Terrors of the Divine Juſtice, and the Clamours of its own upbraiding Sins, and encourage it to triumph in the Language of St. *Paul*, *Rom.* viii. 33. *Who ſhall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God that juſtifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh Interceſſion for us.*

But 3*dly*, THE Words of my Text, in their moſt obvious Senſe, denote the Influence which an offending Servant's Carriage hath upon his offended Maſter. If the Offender, when he is reproved for his Fault, returns

returns a mild, ſubmiſſive and yielding Anſwer to his Maſter, he commonly aſſwages his Wrath, and prevents the farther Progreſs of it: but if he gives ſawcy and contemptuous Language upon ſuch occaſions, as it is too common for ſuch People to do, he exaſperates his Maſter's Paſſion, rendring his own Offence much more provoking than it was before.

A noble and celebrated Author of our own, ingeniouſly applies this Rule to the Conduct of any inferior Perſon, when his Superior, who has a juſt Authority over him, charges him with any Neglect or Miſdeed. 'Two things, ſays he, *Solomon* adviſes in 'this Caſe. The one is, that an Anſwer be made: 'the other, that it be ingenuous. The firſt of which 'contains three Precepts. Firſt, that the accountable 'Party beware of ſtanding mute, in a profound and 'ſullen Silence; which either charges the Fault wholly 'upon himſelf, or impeaches his Maſter of Injuſtice, as if 'his Ears were not open to a juſt Defence. 2*dly*, That 'he beware of delaying his Anſwer, or of craving 'longer time for his Defence; becauſe this plainly 'betrays him, that he is deviſing ſome cunning and 'counterfeit Apology, inſtead of an honeſt, fair An'ſwer, which might be made preſently. But then '3*dly*, Let his Anſwer be very ſoft and temperate; 'not harſh or peremptory: for that will make the 'Buſineſs worſe than if it had never been meddled 'with at all; and increaſe that Wrath which he 'ſhould ſtudy to appeaſe.

I cannot think of a Caſe wherein both parts of my Text are more notably illuſtrated, than in the Buſineſs between *David* and *Nabal*, 1 *Sam.* xxv. *David* and his Men, while they ſojourned in the Wilderneſs of *Paran*, at a diſtance from *Saul*, had done many

good Offices for *Nabal*'s Herdſmen, and not only forbore to meddle with their Cattle, but likewiſe protected them from the Rapine of others. In confidence of theſe Obligations *David* ſent to *Nabal* on his ſhearing-day, requeſting him to give his young Men a portion of his good cheer. But *Nabal* anſwered the young Men churliſhly, *Who is David? and who is the Son of Jeſſe? There be many Servants now-a-days, who run away from their Maſters. Shall I then take my Bread, and my Water, and my Fleſh, that I have killed for my Shearers, and give it to Men, whom I know not whence they be?*

THESE grievous Words ſo irritated *David* and his Soldiers, that they took their Arms, and would have vented their Wrath in the utter Deſtruction of *Nabal* and his Family; had not his Wife, who was of a quite different Spirit and Temper, immediately prepared a Preſent, much larger than what would have ſufficed at the firſt; and carried it to meet *David*, and preſented it upon her Knees, begging pardon for the rudeneſs of her Husband, excuſing herſelf, that ſhe ſaw not his Meſſengers, giving the great Man his due Praiſe, and beſeeching him *to accept of the Bleſſing of her hand*. By this humble and obliging Deportment, ſhe not only gave a turn to his Anger, but gained ſo great a ſhare of his Eſteem and Affections, that upon the death of her churliſh Husband, ſhe became his Wife.

WE muſt confeſs that this ingenuous Submiſſion does not always ſucceed ſo well, becauſe it does not always meet with ingenuous and placable Minds on the other Side. There are ſome Spirits ſo rough and boiſterous, that no degree of mild Application is able to mollify them, but like Oyl caſt into the Fire, it

farther

farther enflames them. They are ſo fond of ſhewing their Power and Superiority over their Inferiors, ſo much in love with their own Diſpoſitions and Humours, ſo reſolved to purſue their own Deſigns to the uttermoſt, that nothing can inſpire them with contrary Affections, not even their own Experience of parallel Caſes, and Incidents in Life. This is well repreſented in that parable *Matt.* xviii. where a Servant who owed his Lord ten thouſand Talents, was upon his humble Submiſſion and Deſire of Forbearance, forgiven the whole Debt. But this great Deliverance could not diſpoſe him *to go and do likewiſe:* for quickly after meeting with one of his fellow-ſervants, who owed him an hundred Pence, he could not be perſuaded by all the Entreaties of this Debtor, to have the like Patience with him, but caſt him into Priſon, 'till he ſhould pay the Debt.

THIS is a Demonſtration that a ſoft Anſwer does not always turn away Wrath; the oppoſite Party may poſſibly be of ſuch an untractable Nature, that nothing will ſatisfy him: And beſides, the Offender is ſometimes a meer Reprobate, who flatters and diſſembles with his Tongue, while *his Heart within him is fully ſet to do Evil.* There are many ſuch abandoned Wretches in the World, who are made up of nothing but fair Speeches and foul Practices; who are always promiſing good and doing evil. But it is the Glory of God and Man to convince ſuch conceited Creatures of the Vanity and Folly of their Conduct, by turning a deaf Ear to their hypocritical Apologies, and making them ſmart ſoundly for their repeated Provocations and incorrigible Abuſes. And therefore the Words of my Text are to be underſtood of ſuch Caſes where there are good Diſpoſitions on both Sides;

and

and it may be agreed to as an univerſal Truth, that *where one ſide unwillingly offends, and the other ſide is of a merciful and reconcileable Nature, there a ſoft Anſwer will turn away Wrath.*

SOME Commentators there are, who interpret my Text as a common Maxim of peaceable Converſation, teaching us to avoid all unneceſſary Contentions, which ſpring from Pride, Ambition, Emulation, and a moroſe, wrathful, and ſplenetick Nature: a Nature which is always furniſhing the Owner of it with ill Language, prompting him to return unbecoming Words, and inclining him to think, that it is more honourable to overcome his Antagoniſt by Sharpneſs and Bitterneſs, than by Lenity and Moderation. This Senſe, as learned Men obſerve, may be well admitted: The *Hebrew* Word, which we tranſlate *Anſwer*, ſignifying alſo what is firſt ſaid; as in the Style of the New Teſtament we find, *Jeſus anſwered*, and others anſwered, when indeed they firſt begun the Diſcourſe. In which Senſe, *he anſwered*, is no more than *he ſaid*; and ſo by theſe Words *Solomon* cautions us, not only to take heed that we be not the Authors of Strife and Contention; but that whoever begins it, we ſhould not continue it by provoking Replies; but endeavour to make an end preſently by mollifying the Matter; and yield much for the ſake of common Tranquillity.

HE that is deſirous to live at Peace in the World, muſt conſider that both himſelf and other Men have many Failings and Infirmities. He muſt conſider, that in Matters of right and wrong, other People will take the Liberty to differ from his Opinion: and will ſometimes contradict and thwart him, even when he has the cleareſt Truth and Reaſon of his ſide. He muſt

expect

expect often to meet with Pride, Self-love, and Confidence in others: he must not imagine that his own Converſation is always free from the Influence of ſuch irregular Paſſions. Therefore he muſt reſolve to bear Reproof and Oppoſition with Patience, becauſe 'tis poſſible that he may deſerve it; which if he does not, yet others who converſe with him may think ſo; and he cannot preſently enlighten their Underſtandings, or rectify their Miſtakes; the beſt way therefore is to be eaſy under them, ſo long as no ill Conſequence follows them. For what if another Man think worſe of me than I deſerve? It may be his Opinion may not weigh much with others; however it cannot make me really worſe than I am: but may ſtir me up to look inwardly, and diſcover ſomething elſe at leaſt that is amiſs, and endeavour to mend it.

HE that would ſave himſelf and others much Trouble and Contention, muſt not be too apt to cenſure and find fault with things when they are tolerably well; he muſt not be over-forward to arraign Mens good Senſe or Manners, for every Word or Action, which is not agreeable to his Reliſh. He muſt remember that his own Imperfections ſtand in need of Pardon, which he muſt be prepared to deſerve of all others, by making them the like Allowances.

IT is excellent Advice which one of the ancient Philoſophers gives upon this Head; *Tull. Off. B.* 1. *c.* 38. 'That in our Commerce and Dealings we make 'it our Buſineſs to be free from all violent Motions 'of the Soul, which reject and caſt off their Alle-'giance to Reaſon. As on the one hand our Diſcourſe 'ſhould be pertinent, lively, and free from Stupidity; 'ſo on the other we ſhould carefully refrain from 'falling into Tranſports of Paſſion, or any Words

'which

'which are unfit for us to give, or others to hear. 'In all our Communications we ſhould be very at-'tentive to keep up a Senſe of Humanity and Reſpect 'for thoſe we converſe with. It ſometimes becomes 'neceſſary for us to expoſtulate with thoſe who have 'done us ill Offices, or to reprehend thoſe who have 'tranſgreſſed a plain Duty which they owed us: In 'the latter Caſe eſpecially we may be allowed to raiſe 'our Voice a little above the common pitch, and to 'uſe ſome Severity of Expreſſion. However let us 'take heed that we do not betray any Cruelty or 'Rancour of Mind; but come to ſuch Corrections as 'to cutting and ſcarrifying of Wounds, with a great 'deal of Unwillingneſs. And indeed we ſhould never 'come to them at all, unleſs it be when no other Me-'thods will do any good. And even then, when we 'are forced to it, we ſhould be ſure to avoid all An-'ger: for whatſoever is acted under the Impulſe of 'this Paſſion, can never be regulated by any meaſures 'of Prudence or Reaſon. Our Rebukes of Offenders, '(eſpecially of ſuch as are under our Direction and 'Authority) ſhould be generally mild and gentle; but 'nevertheleſs ſuch as ſhould carry ſome weight along 'with them: obſerving a Mean between too great 'Eaſineſs, and breaking out into angry and contume-'lious Speeches. And whatever Sharpneſs we may 'expreſs in our Reproofs, we ſhould let the Party ſo 'corrected, know, that we do it altogether for his 'good, and not for the Gratification of any of our 'own Humours. In the Conteſts which we have 'with our greateſt Adverſaries, whatever opprobrious 'Reflections they caſt upon us, it will be our beſt 'way to keep our Minds calm and ſedate, and free 'from the Ferment and Agitations of Anger, as know-

'ing

'ing that while we are in ſuch a Commotion, we can 'neither be conſiſtent with the rules of Gravity, nor 'approved of thoſe who ſhall behold our Infirmity.

NOW this Philoſophy is a very good Comment on the Words of my Text, and very agreeable with the Wiſdom of *Solomon*, who in this ſame xvth chap. to look no farther, gives ſeveral other Counſels and Rules for the well ordering of our Diſcourſe. *The Tongue of the wiſe uſeth Knowledge aright; but the mouth of Fools poureth out Fooliſhneſs.* Intimating, that in matters of Debate it is far from being the moſt commendable way to throw out all that a Man thinks or knows to the Diſadvantage of his Adverſary: though ſome are apt to value themſelves upon this talking without Reſerve, as a piece of Plain-dealing, and that they are no Diſſemblers; but the royal Preacher condemns ſuch a Practice, as contrary to the Laws of Society and Prudence. *The mouth of Fools poureth out Fooliſhneſs.* And this is in a manner repeated at ver. 28. *The Heart of the righteous ſtudieth to anſwer: but the Mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.* i. e. A Man that wiſhes the Peace and Proſperity of his Brethren, is not raſh and haſty to ſpeak of them; but conſiders and weighs his Words with Diſcretion, before he ſuffers them to paſs the Door of his Lips: whereas thoſe who are of an envious and malignant Spirit, are fond of picking up evil Reports, which they ſcatter abroad like Firebrands wherever they come, that they may raiſe Troubles and Combuſtions in the World.

AND thus much of the doctrinal part of my Text. The Practice of it is not every Man's Talent; the Weakneſs of our Minds, or the Warmth of our Tempers commonly making it a difficult Task. *David* himſelf

himſelf was ſome Years in learning the due Obſervance of that ſhort Leſſon, which he impoſed upon himſelf, *Pſal.* xxxix. *I ſaid I will take heed to my Ways, that I offend not with my Tongue. Solomon*, who inculcates it ſo frequently upon his Children, was doubtleſs obſervant of it himſelf. But his Son *Reboboam* was no manner of Proficient in it; for when upon his Acceſſion to the Throne of his Father, the Tribes of *Iſrael* addreſt him for ſome Alleviation of the Taxes and Impoſitions which *Solomon* had laid upon them, he was ſo far from ſoothing their Grievance with a ſoft Anſwer, that in a menacing way he told them, *he would add Weight to their Yoke, and chaſtiſe them with Scorpions.* 1 *Kings* xii. Which hard Words provoked all the ten Tribes of *Iſrael* to revolt from him: For which the Son of *Syrach*, *Eccleſiaſticus* xlvii. calls him *the Fooliſhneſs of the People*, and one that had no Underſtanding, becauſe he loſt the greateſt part of his Kingdom by following the Advice of young, light, and vain Counſellors.

THUS grievous Words are inconſiſtent with good Policy: and they are no leſs contrary to true Religion, as the ſacred Scripture abundantly teaches: but no where do we find them ſo ſtrictly prohibited, as in the Goſpel of Chriſt, who as he never ſpake unadviſedly with his Lips, ſo he calls upon all his Diſciples to learn of him this Leſſon of Meekneſs, aſſuring them *they ſhall be accountable for every evil Word at the laſt day*, and threatening the infernal Fire to him who ſhall outrage his Brother with his Tongue.

INDEED he will not allow any Profeſſor of his Faith to render railing for railing to their greateſt Enemies, but *when they curſe you*, ſays he, *bleſs them, and pray for them when they deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute*

ſecute you. And his Apoſtles have numbered theſe Offences of the Tongue, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Envyings, Boaſtings, Blaſphemies, in the Black-liſt of the Works of Darkneſs.

NOW ſince it is the Duty of all Chriſtians to refrain from angry, ſpiteful, and indecent Language; it is more eſpecially incumbent npon Children, Servants, and all that are in a ſtate of Subjection, to be reſpectful and civil to thoſe who have the Authority over them. It will generally be found for their Advantage to give ſoft Anſwers, when they are reproved or chaſtiſed for their Faults; for thus they will render the Reproofs and Chaſtiſements the lighter. But if they ſhould happen to have ſuch over-indulgent Governors, as will ſuffer them to repine, and murmur, and inſult, without giving them due Correction for it, let them not think themſelves happy under this Lenity; for hereby they are but hardened in their diſagreeable Manners, and rendred unfit for modeſt Converſation, and become more obnoxious to the Diſpleaſure of Almighty God, who has threatened *to deal frowardly with the froward, and to reſiſt the proud, while he gives Grace to the humble.*

I wiſh all Children and Servants, who are arrived at years of Diſcretion, would ſeriouſly lay theſe things to Heart, and comply with thoſe Rules of Meekneſs and Gentleneſs, which I am recommending to them. They would hereby deliver the World from infinite Broils, Animoſities, and Contentions. For by diſcharging their Duty to their reſpective Governors, they would in their turn have dutiful Children and Servants of their own; for ſuch is the Standard of Divine Juſtice, that *with what Meaſure they mete to others,*

others, it ſhall be meaſured to them again. And ſo a Succeſſion of orderly Families would be continued throughout all Generations. And then we need not enquire after the Spirit which would reign in larger Societies; for the particular Members being thus trained to Obedience at home, would practiſe it abroad, and keep to their reſpective Ranks and Stations, without Strife or Debate, like good Soldiers of Jeſus Chriſt, who hath ſo ſtrictly obliged us to be humble, and to prefer others before our ſelves, that he hath ſaid, *He that will be greateſt among you, let him be the leaſt of all, and Servant to all the reſt; even as the Son of Man came not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter, and to give his Life a Ranſom for many.* To him with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON C.

On the Twenty-fifth Sunday *after* TRINITY.

EVENING.

PROVERBS xvi. 21.

The wiſe in heart ſhall be called prudent; and the ſweetneſs of the lips encreaſeth learning.

WHICH words not carrying a very obvious and determinate ſenſe, we will conſider them in a threefold view. *Firſt*, As they are an aſſertion that true Wiſdom will ſhew it ſelf in a prudent conduct of life. *Secondly*, As they offer a compariſon between Wiſdom and Eloquence. *Thirdly*, As they intimate a rule of profitable teaching.

And *Firſt*, THE wiſe in heart *ſhall be called prudent*; his wiſdom will gain him the reputation of a diſcreet, ſerious, and ſenſible man. I will not be tedious in ſhewing the diſtinctions between Wiſdom and Prudence, but ſhall juſt obſerve, that Wiſdom is the mother of intellectual, and Prudence of practical virtues: The firſt reſides in the mind, and the other exerts it ſelf in the manners and actions of men.

IT may be ſaid, that Wiſdom may be ſeparated from Prudence; or in other words, that knowing and doing are two things. Which I readily grant. We hear it complained of, in the writings of all teachers of Religion and Virtue, and we cannot avoid ſeeing examples of it every day. But this is no good argument againſt the aſſertion of my Text, that the wiſe in heart will be a man of prudent conduct. This exception lies againſt the head, not the heart: And we muſt confeſs, that there are many men in the world who have wiſe heads and fooliſh hearts. Men of good capacities, clear underſtandings, well improved by reading and obſervation; but after all, they have ſome odd humour, fond opinion, beloved luſt, which hinders them from living according to their knowledge.

SUCH wiſe men as theſe, *Solomon* puts into the catalogue of his Fools, becauſe they have the means of doing well in their power, but make no uſe of them. In this catalogue are various ranks and claſſes of ſcorners, proud, froward, wiſe in their own conceit, haters of diſcipline and reproof; men of ſuperior craft and ſubtilty, able to out-wit and cheat a great part of the world. But *Solomon* comprehends them all under one common denomination of Fools, becauſe they are vitious, and apply their wit to miſchievous purpoſes: Which a truly wiſe man will not be guilty of. For *the wiſdom of the prudent*, ſays he, *is to underſtand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.* The former is careful to enter upon good ways, and walk uprightly in them. He chuſes honeſt ends, and takes lawful methods to attain them. He is ſagacious in ſpying inconveniencies, and as quick-ſighted to his intereſts; but neither the one nor the other can tempt him out of thoſe bounds which piety and virtue

tue have preſcribed for the rules of his actions. On the contrary, a falſe and counterfeit wiſdom is wholly made up of fallacies and cunning devices. *The folly of fools is deceit*; their ſenſe, learning, reaſonings, and vivacity of wit ſerve but to heighten their folly, to ſweeten their deluſions, and confirm them in their errors.

THIS is the caſe, where Wiſdom reſts only in the head: But when it deſcends to the heart, and warms the affections with the love of that which is good, it fails not to bleſs the world with a truly valuable and uſeful man. For *not the wiſe in head, but the wiſe in heart ſhall be called prudent*. 'When Wiſdom entreth 'into thy heart, ſays our Preacher, ii. 10. and Know-'ledge is pleaſant unto thy ſoul: Diſcretion ſhall pre-'ſerve thee; Underſtanding ſhall keep thee.' When you can find a pleaſure and ſatisfaction in the laws of piety and virtue, this will unite you to them, ſo that you will not be able to depart from them. Your own experience will teach you, that it is your beſt policy to walk in thoſe plain ways; and that no men underſtand their own intereſt ſo well, as they that cannot be perſuaded by any temptations to deviate from them.

FOR theſe reaſons *Solomon* earneſtly exhorts the candidate of Wiſdom to apply his heart to the ſtudy of it. *My ſon*, ſays he, *give me thine heart. Upon the table of thine heart write mine inſtructions; keep them and lay them up as a treaſure in the midſt of it. The wiſe in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool ſhall fall*, i. e. He that is truly wiſe, differs from a conceited talkative man in this, that he thankfully receives good advice, and avoids the dangers of which he is admoniſhed. To ſuch wiſe men he promiſes, that they ſhall inherit glory, while ſhame ſhall be the

promotion of fools. Such fools ſhall be ſervants to the wiſe in heart. They may for a time make their way in the world by an oſtentation of parts and abilities: But he who governs himſelf by the rules of true Wiſdom, ſhall at laſt become their maſter, and far outſhine them in reputation and authority. The wiſe in heart ſhall be called prudent, when thoſe that ſerve themſelves of diſhoneſt and fraudulent arts, ſhall have the reproach and infamy which they deſerve.

THEREFORE keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the iſſues of life. Out of the abundance of your thoughts and affections you will of neceſſity both ſpeak and act. Conſequently your heart is the fountain of all your words and actions, the ſeed-plot of thoſe fruits which appear in your life and converſation. Let but Wiſdom govern in your heart, and then the fruits of your life can never be amiſs.

Secondly, MY Text affords us an occaſion to compare Wiſdom and Eloquence together. *The wiſe in heart ſhall be called prudent, and the ſweetneſs of the lips encreaſeth learning.* Which may be thus paraphraſed. 'He whoſe mind is furniſhed with all neceſſary maxims of Wiſdom, will juſtly merit eſteem for his prudent counſels: But if he have the powerful charms of Eloquence alſo, to convey his ſentiments delightfully to others, it will add a greater value to his Wiſdom, and render him the fitter for any publick office, eſpecially for that of diſcourſe and teaching: when his juſt way of thinking is accompanied with proper elocution and a ready utterance.'

THE *Preacher*, ſays *Solomon* of himſelf, *ſought to find out acceptable words. He gave good heed, and ſought out, and ſet in order many Proverbs.* Tho' he was endued

endued with incomparable Wiſdom by the ſpecial gift of God; yet did not this illumination cauſe him to neglect human ſtudies and means of improvement; but he readily liſtened to all men of any good ſenſe and experience, and having weighed what they ſaid, committed their moſt notable ſayings to writing, for the benefit and inſtruction of all ages. Nothing did he write that was frivolous or trifling, but maxims of the moſt ſolid Wiſdom, of the moſt ſerious and general Concernment.

IN ſeveral other places doth he teſtify his approbation, not only of the ſubject matter, but ornaments of ſpeech. As preſently after my Text: *Pleaſant words are like a honey-comb, ſweet to the ſoul, and health to the bones.* When the Speaker is not only ſubſtantial but delightful in his diſcourſe, he is as welcome to his hearers as honey to the taſte, or health after ſickneſs. And again, xxv. 11. *A word fitly ſpoken,* ſays he, *is like apples of gold in pictures of ſilver*; or, to make this compariſon more intelligible, it is like a handſome preſent of gold or jewels, offered in the fineſt purſe or casket, in the moſt obliging and acceptable manner.

IT cannot be doubted but that Wiſdom and Eloquence united together, are very deſirable talents in a Legiſlator, Governor, or Teacher of Religion. However, there have been ſome excellent perſons of this ſort, whom nature did not endue with the latter of theſe gifts. *Moſes*, for inſtance, admirable for his Wiſdom and Learning of all ſorts, yet by his own confeſſion was no good Speaker, but *ſlow of ſpeech*, and of a faultering tongue. The *Jews* think he had ſome impediment of liſping or ſtammering: The LXX *Greek* Interpreters underſtand the words, *ſlow of ſpeech*, as if

he had but a weak, ſmall, ſlender voice. St. *Stephen* ſays that *Moſes* was *mighty in words* as well as in deeds; which is no contradiction to the forementioned Text, *Exod.* iv. 10. if we underſtand it of his writings, which are weighty and eloquent, full of pathetick diſcourſes, and well-compoſed ſpeeches: Wherein it appears, that whatever defects *Moſes* had in his pronunciation, he had none in his compoſitions, but has adorned his writings with all the flowers of Rhetorick and arts of Perſuaſion. And I am very inclinable to their opinion who think, that either by the ſpecial help of God, or uncommon care and diligence, *Moſes* in time corrected the natural impediment of his ſpeech, as was done many hundred years after in *Greece*, by their moſt famous Orator *Demoſthenes*.

BUT whatever imperfection of this kind *Moſes* laboured under, it did not hinder him from diſcharging the part, both of an excellent Legiſlator and a Judge. In the exerciſe of which offices there is no need of eloquence; but of a quick apprehenſion, exact judgment, and proper language; which *Moſes* never wanted.

MUCH the ſame things which have been ſaid of *Moſes*, the Prophet *Jeremiah* and the Apoſtle St. *Paul* have recorded of themſelves, that they had not the compleat faculty of elocution; whether it was by reaſon of ſome natural defect in the organs of ſpeech, or from ſome accidental hurt or infirmity, is unknown. But this is certain, that thro' the abundance of their Wiſdom, their preaching was of ſignal ſervice to the Church of God; as likewiſe their writings have been and will be throughout all generations.

AS to phraſe and manner of expreſſion, the moſt ancient Law-givers and Philoſophers of any Nation

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or Republick that we have heard of, have choſe to deliver their Laws and politick Maxims in ſhort ſentences and pleaſant parables, rather than in elaborate and copious orations. This is the ſtyle of the holy Decalogue, of the Wiſdom of *Solomon*, of the twelve Tables of the *Romans*, of the Laws of *Athens* and *Lacedæmon*, ſhort and plain, comprehending a great deal of ſenſe in a few words.

EVERY body ſees that this is the beſt ſtyle for the grand maxims of Religion and Government, which would be of little uſe, were they not penned with ſuch perſpicuity and brevity, as that the common people might eaſily underſtand them, and retain them in memory. Of ſuch a ſtyle I ſuppoſe *Solomon* ſpeaks, *Eccleſiaſt.* xii. 11. when he ſays, *The words of the wiſe are as goads, and as nails faſtened by the maſters of aſſemblies.* There is the like power in their acute ſayings to ſtir up the minds of men to the practice of Religion and Virtue, as there is in a goad to prick the dull ox forward to draw the plough; and they are as apt to ſtick in the memory, as nails do when driven into a board, and to collect the thoughts, affections, and reſolutions, into one certain point.

WE read of the ancient *Romans*, that they were for a long time tenacious of this brief and comprehenſive kind of literature, and very loth to admit of the more diffuſive and artful elocution of the *Greeks* to break in upon it. *Tully*, *Plutarch*, and others report, that in the time of *Cato* the Elder, when the *Roman* Common-wealth was in a flouriſhing condition, the *Athenians* having ſome buſineſs with their Senate, tranſacted it by the embaſſy of three learned Orators, *viz.* *Carneades* the Academick, *Diogenes* the Stoick, and *Critolaus* the Peripatetick. The graceful-

neſs of *Carneades* his Oratory, filled, like a ſudden wind, all the City with the ſound of it. One day diſcourſing before *Galba* and *Cato*, he made a noble panegyrick in praiſe of Juſtice. The day following he took the contrary ſide, and confuted all the arguments which he had alledged before. This, I ſay, ſoon filled the City with his fame, that *a Grecian was arrived who could defend any cauſe, and perſuade men to what he pleaſed.* His fame ſoon brought the young *Romans* about him; whom he ſo captivated with his Rhetorick, that they left all other diverſions to hear, and admire, and learn his art. Nor were their parents generally diſpleaſed with it. But *Cato*, fearing leſt youth ſhould ſo apply themſelves to the art of ſpeaking, as to prefer it before action and military glory, moved the Senate to diſpatch the buſineſs of theſe Embaſſadors, and ſend them home to their own ſchools, to declaim to the *Grecian* children, rather than corrupt the *Romans*, whom they could perſuade to any thing, to forſake their ancient Laws and Cuſtoms.

THIS faculty of perſuading to any thing, and of ſetting a good face upon a bad matter, is the reaſon, I ſuppoſe, why *Plato* compares Rhetorick to Tyranny, and would no more endure ſuch Orators than Poets in his Common-wealth. And it is a great juſtification of the order of my Text, where *the ſweetneſs of the lips*, or eloquence, is put after *the wiſe in heart*; intimating that Eloquence ſhould evermore be under the direction of Wiſdom. Whenever it is not ſo directed, it is of moſt pernicious conſequence both in Religion and civil Government. There is no Hereſy or other error in Religion, but what has prevailed, and gained acceptance by abuſed Eloquence. And by the ſame means ſome of the greateſt duties of Chriſti-

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anity have been neglected and laid aſide. If a man be admired for his learning and cloſe reaſoning, whether he be Eccleſiaſtick or Laick, Writer or Speaker, he commonly becomes the Oracle of his admirers ſo far, that from him they take the meaſure of their religious Principles, even contrary to the plain letter of the ſacred Text. And it will be impoſſible to perſuade them that Salvation is to be obtained by Chriſt alone; or that there is any thing in the communion of Saints, the unity of Faith, uniformity of Worſhip, and a great many more Chriſtian Doctrines and Duties, if their Oracles inſinuate any thing againſt them, or do but forbear to recommend them.

ELOQUENCE in the Law is no leſs detrimental to common Juſtice, when it is not under the direction of Wiſdom. When the enacting part of a Statute is tedious and intricate, it leaves abundant room for contention and ſtrife. And how often hath a torrent of Eloquence at the Bar run down a righteous Cauſe; eſpecially when it hath been in favour of the rich againſt the poor, the noble againſt the vulgar, or any one that is magnified againſt a deſpiſed party.

I ſay therefore, that Eloquence when ſeparated from Wiſdom, is very deſtructive to Church and State; but ſerviceable to both when it is in the mouth of wiſe men; of men fearing God, careful to obſerve his Law; ſtudious to know their Duty, and conſcientious in the diſcharge of it: Which I am ſure is the character of that wiſe man whom *Solomon* would form by his writings. An eloquent tongue and ſweetneſs of lips in ſuch a man, is certainly a great help to his Wiſdom, to render it uſeful and inſtructive. And this brings us in the

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THIRD place, to obſerve from my Text the moſt effectual method both of teaching and learning our duty.

IN which, ſays *Solomon*, *the principal thing is Wiſdom*; therefore labour after that in the firſt place, *Prov.* iv. 7. Let us ſet God always before us, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks; let us have his Glory and Service conſtantly in view, and zealouſly endeavour to make his ways known upon Earth, and his ſaving health among all People. Let us account it our greateſt honour to be Chiefs in the cauſe of God, to ſignalize our ſelves under his banner againſt Sin, the World, and the Devil: To build up his Church, to enlarge his Kingdom, to exalt his Throne in the hearts of the children of men; to make his Image viſible in the World, by walking in it as his children, cauſing our light to ſhine before men, in patterns of Holineſs and good Works, that many may be turned from darkneſs to this light, and be reſcued from the tyranny of *Satan*, into this glorious liberty.

IN order to this, let us ſtudy to know our ſelves, and to ſee what faculties and talents God hath beſtowed upon us, and by daily uſe and exerciſe to improve them, and add both to their weight and number. By diligent hearing, reading, and meditating, let us furniſh our minds with the Doctrines and Precepts of Wiſdom, and conceive worthy notions of the divine Majeſty and his heavenly Kingdom; and communicate them to others by ſuitable diſcourſe and converſation upon proper occaſions.

IF we would but accuſtom our ſelves to meditate on theſe things ſo as to ſee their Dignity and Importance, to take delight in them, and to converſe about them with that ſerioufneſs, reverence, and good

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method, which alone can make ſuch converſations profitable, we ſhould ſoon get above our ſmattering knowledge, and narrow, cold conceptions of them. For ſuch improvements in true Wiſdom we have opportunities and means in abundance, and want nothing but inclinations and proper methods to make a right uſe of them.

THE bleſſed Author and Finiſher of our Faith, was the moſt accompliſhed Teacher that ever came into the World, both for his Wiſdom and his Eloquence. And while others were celebrated for wiſe men, he was ſtyled, *The Wiſdom of God*, as containing in himſelf all the treaſures of divine Wiſdom. While others were partakers of the gifts and graces of the holy Spirit, he had the fulneſs of it, without any ſtint or meaſure. *He is that light that ſhineth in darkneſs, and the darkneſs comprehendeth it not.* He knew the everlaſting Father, not by ſuch Viſions and Oracles as revealed him to the Prophets, but he was with him from all Eternity, and came into this World to make known thoſe things which he had ſeen and heard in the divine Preſence and Boſom and inmoſt Counſels. Hence he teſtifyeth, that *no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son ſhall reveal him.* In him was fulfilled that of *Pſalm* lxxviii. *I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept ſecret from the foundation of the world:* Which he taught with ſuch unuſual power and energy, that his hearers were often aſtoniſhed, and asked, *Whence hath this man this wiſdom?*

HIS Prudence was far ſuperior to the craft and contrivances of his enemies, as appears by his anſwers to their captious queſtions about the Reſurrection, the paying of tribute to the *Romans*, and ſeveral other matters;

matters; as well as by his conduct which he uſed to eſcape the plots which they laid for him, to apprehend him and take away his life.

THE like Prudence he recommends to his Diſciples, ſaying, *Be wiſe as ſerpents.* 'Beware of wicked 'men; expect that they will prove to you like ſo ma-'ny wolves and foxes to a flock of ſheep: Take care, 'as much as you fairly can, to avoid their ſnares; 'and when they perſecute you in one City, flee to 'another.'

TOGETHER with this ſuperlative Wiſdom and Prudence, our Lord had certainly all external advantages of an eloquent Speaker: Which were foreſeen by thoſe Prophets who ſpoke of his coming into the World. The Author of the xlv *Pſalm* ſays, *Full of grace are thy lips, becauſe God hath bleſſed thee for ever*, or endued thee throughout with all the moſt excellent faculties both of body and mind. Agreeably to this Prophecy of Chriſt we read, *Luke* iv. that when he firſt began to preach in the Synagogue at *Nazareth*, the whole aſſembly *wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.* St. *Matthew* ſays, at the cloſe of his Sermon in the Mount, that the People were aſtoniſhed at his Doctrine: for *he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.* St. *Luke* ſays, xi. 27. that on a certain day, as he was preaching to the people, a woman of the aſſembly cry'd out, in tranſport at the Eloquence of his diſcourſe, *Bleſſed is the womb which bare thee, and the paps which thou haſt ſucked. Laſtly*, We learn from *John* vii. that at the feaſt of Tabernacles, Jeſus went into the Temple, and preached ſo powerfully, that many acknowledged him to be the *Meſſiah.* Whereupon the Phariſees and Chief-Prieſts ſent Officers to arreſt him.

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Who after they had ſtood and heard him out, returned without him; and when their Maſters demanded the reaſon why they had not brought him, their anſwer was, *Never man ſpake like this man*; which was a fair confeſſion that they were ſo charmed with his Eloquence, that they had no power to lay hands on him.

FROM all theſe paſſages it appears, that our Lord was a moſt accompliſhed Teacher, being endued with the greateſt Wiſdom, Prudence, and faculties of good Elocution.

THE ſame gifts he promiſed to beſtow upon his Apoſtles, for the very ſame end and purpoſe. When he ordained them to preach the Goſpel, he bid them conſider themſelves *as the lights of the world*, who were to teach men both by their preaching and example, and aſſured them *he would give them a mouth and wiſdom, which all their adverſaries ſhould not be able to gainſay nor reſiſt*. For the fulfilling of this promiſe, when the Holy Ghoſt was ſent down upon them at *Pentecoſt*, it lighted on them in the ſhape of cloven tongues, as a proper ſymbol of this power. And their preaching, with the effects of it, fully confirmed it.

THE ſame holy Spirit is ſtill in the Church: And tho' the miraculous virtues of it, not being now ſo neceſſary, are in a great meaſure ceaſed, yet let not our diligent endeavours ceaſe, and then we ſhall not fail to attain ſuch a portion of his graces as ſhall be ſufficient for all the ends and purpoſes of our Religion. For tho' both the ſons of *David*, the author of my Text, and the author of our Faith, had Wiſdom by the ſpecial gift of God, yet they were not wanting in their diligent ſtudies, and daily exerciſe

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and improvement of it. To teach us, that no ſuch ſupernatural illuminations are to be depended upon, as ſhall ſuperſede human care and induſtry. But he that ſeeks after Wiſdom, by his prayers to God, and his reading and hearing of his holy Word, and honeſt application of it in the ordering of his life, ſhall not ſeek in vain. Tho' his Wiſdom at firſt might ſeem no more than a grain of muſtard-ſeed, yet by a diligent cultivation it will wonderfully encreaſe, and bring forth abundance of good fruit; according to the maniſold promiſes of our Lord to thoſe who do his will, and pray, and live, and improve their talents as he has directed. To him, *&c.*

SERMON CI.

On the Twenty-ſixth Sunday *after* TRINITY.

MORNING.

PROVERBS xvii. 16.

Wherefore is there a Price in the hand of a Fool to get Wiſdom, ſeeing he hath no Heart to it?

THE principal Points which *Solomon* treats of in this Book of *Proverbs*, are *Wiſdom* and *Folly*, which he rightly conſidered as the great Fountains of the Happineſs or Miſery of Mankind: and therefore concluded, that he could write nothing ſo uſeful for us, as a ſet of ſhort and clear Precepts, which were proper to furniſh us with juſt Notions of Wiſdom, and convince us how much it is for our Intereſt and Advantage to put them in Practice.

IN order to this he lays a good Foundation to build upon, aſſuring us, that *the Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wiſdom*; which is as much as to ſay, that whatever is contrary to the Maxims of Piety and Virtue, or to any of their reſpective Branches, is but Folly, however it may put on the ſpecious appear-

ance and colours of Wiſdom. By this determination he places to the account of Folly all fraudulent and artificial Dealings, all Uncleanneſs, Gluttony, and Drunkenneſs, all omiſſions of honeſt Induſtry and Diligence in the affairs of Life; becauſe however ingenious ſome men may ſeem to be, in gaining their ends of Riches and Pleaſures, and gratifying their ſenſual Appetites by ſuch means; yet theſe means being violations of that Sincerity and Truth, that Temperance and Chaſtity, thoſe honeſt Endeavours and Pains which are all branches of Virtue, have conſequently nothing at all of true Wiſdom in them, but argue a falſe Judgment and want of Underſtanding in the Mind from whence they flow.

SO that we may define *Wiſdom* to be, *A right apprehenſion of thoſe things which are beſt for us, and a diligent purſuit of them by ſuch means as are agreeable to the Laws of Piety and Virtue.*

NOW the royal Preacher in the words of my Text obſerves, that men have ſometimes Abilities and Opportunities to act wiſely for themſelves, but neglect them, and have no Heart to make their juſt Advantages of them. *There is a Price in the hand of a Fool to get Wiſdom, but he hath no Heart to it.* We will conſider what this Price is, or wherein the Means and Abilities to get Wiſdom conſiſt.

AND *Iſt*, A man of good natural faculties and endowments of Mind, may be ſaid to have the Price of Wiſdom in his hand, when he hath no Heart to it. This ſhows that by the word *Fool*, we are not to underſtand an Idiot, or Perſon void of common Senſe; for the fault is charged upon his Heart, not upon his Head: It is not for want of a Capacity, but for want of a good will to Wiſdom, that he continues to be a

Fool.

Fool. There is nothing more evident in experience than this, that many a man's rational Soul is like a piece of uncultivated ground, barren of every thing but weeds; whereas, were it duly improved, it might bring forth the beſt Fruit. Or we may compare him to a Houſe, the Rooms whereof are well contrived, but have nothing but bare walls, no furniture to make them uſeful. The fitteſt repreſentative of ſuch People, is the *unprofitable Servant* in the Goſpel, who received a Talent from his Lord, but wrapt it up in a Napkin, and let it lye without any improvement. He had this Price, this foundation of natural faculties to get Wiſdom, but had no Heart to it.

2*dly*, THIS Price may be underſtood of the Schools of good Education and Learning. Thoſe who are bred up in ſuch places, how commonly do they act the part of Fools, and neglect to attain the knowledge of ſuch uſeful Arts and Sciences as are taught there? The Child of tender years, how hard is he to be weaned from trifling amuſements, and brought to turn his thoughts ſeriouſly to any valuable part of Learning! and when he grows up towards man, how apt is he to prefer the pleaſures and exerciſes of the Body, above the improvements of the Mind! having much ſtronger propenſions to Vice than Virtue, purſuing every thing more ardently than thoſe ſtudies which are injoyn'd him; and pleaſing himſelf in the enjoyment of his idle Company, that he is learning to know men, by which he gets the knowledge, and many times the impreſſion of their corrupt ways and irregular paſſions, when he ſhould be converſing with the works of more inſtructive Company and faithful Monitors, I mean the writings of wiſe and learned men. I confeſs, all learned Books do not fall

under this Character. Too many there are which are full of Wit and void of Wiſdom; and too many Students ſpend moſt of their time in the peruſal of them, becauſe the matter of them is moſt grateful to their corrupt taſte and fancy. So that the Price to get Wiſdom, their Opportunities which ſhould be employ'd in learning that which ſhould enable them to do good to themſelves or others, are miſ-ſpent in ſuch ſtudies as help to complete their fooliſh and extravagant Humours. And this is the reaſon, that among the great number of men of Letters, there are ſo few who are really the wiſer and better for what they have learned.

3*dly*, RICHES are in many reſpects the Price of Wiſdom, in that they enable their Owners to buy Books, to hire Teachers, and to be at leiſure to ſpend their time in the ſtudy of uſeful Learning. But how commonly do we ſee this Price alſo put into the hands of Fools? To ſay that rich men often neglect their Opportunities to improve their Knowledge and Virtue, is ſaying much too little; for indeed they too frequently abuſe them to quite contrary purpoſes, committing all manner of folly and madneſs in the ſpending of their wealth. Many a man in all probability would have lived and died humble, ſober, chaſte, and temperate, had not his Riches exalted him above meaſure, and diſpoſed him to hearken to Flatterers, who have perſuaded him to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think, and encouraged him to tranſgreſs the Laws of God and Men. It is the known character of Riches, that they eaſily grow the Idols of their poſſeſſors, and ſteal away their Hearts from the Love of God. And whereas our Lord obſerves, that if they are laid out in Pious and Charitable

uſes,

uſes, they become a treaſure in Heaven; on the contrary, he ſays, they often hinder men from entring into his Kingdom. St. *James* complains, that in his time the rich men of the World were moſt forward to oppreſs and perſecute the poor Chriſtians, *and blaſpheme the holy name of Chriſt, by which they were called.* I wiſh there were not too much reaſon for the like complaint at this day. But it is too notorious that many rich People diſtinguiſh themſelves from the meaner ſort by a peculiar contempt of the Ordinances of Religion, affecting to be thought above the reſtraints of ſuch Laws: *They are ſo proud that they care not for God, neither is God in all their thoughts.*

4*thly*, MEN in great Power and Authority have the Price of Wiſdom in their hands. It is the happineſs of all Princes, Judges, Magiſtrates and Miniſters, above other men, that they have more opportunities of ſerving God, and procuring the welfare of their Brethren, by making and executing good Laws, by puniſhing Evil-doers, and rewarding thoſe that do well, and maintaining the cauſe of Righteouſneſs and Truth, againſt all Iniquity and Impiety. Nothing can be a greater Bleſſing to any place, than a good Governor, who makes it his buſineſs both to know and do thoſe things, which advance the ſpiritual and temporal felicity of the People over whom he preſides; under whoſe adminiſtration every Virtue flouriſhes, and Vices, like ill weeds, are continually rooted out and caſt into the Fire. Such a conduct as this, is a greater Ornament to a Magiſtrate, than all the Riches and Honours which attend his ſtation.

BUT alas! how few are there in Authority who are perſuaded of this? How many aſpire to the high place, and rejoice in it, more for the ſake of their

own private Intereſts and Gratifications, than out of any deſign to be real Patrons and Benefactors to the Community? who uſe their Power for an occaſion of ſinning without reſtraint, rather than for reſtraining Sin in others: And are more concerned to preſerve the Affections of wicked men, by ſparing their beloved Luſts, than they are to pleaſe God, and recommend themſelves to his favour, by executing his Laws impartially and without reſpect of Perſons. What an infinite deal of good might be done among People by a righteous adminiſtration and diſcharge of all Offices! and what a very little is commonly done, by reaſon of the defects of ſuch adminiſtrations! becauſe the reins are in the hands of men who are Slaves to ſome Luſt, and have not an Eye to the will of God, and a Heart to true Wiſdom.

5thly, WE have all a large Talent, a noble Price put into our hands to get Wiſdom, in the Ordinances of Religion and means of Grace which we enjoy. Never was the Library of the moſt celebrated Academy of Philoſophers ſo well furniſhed with Books, for the virtuous and happy conduct of Life in every condition and ſtation of it, as is the Apartment of the meaneſt Chriſtian, who is but owner of ſo much as a *Bible*; for that alone contains fuller inſtructions, and weightier arguments for good living, than all the grave Oracles of meer human Learning put together; ſo that every one of us may go to the fountain head as often as he pleaſes, *and draw living water out of the wells of Salvation*. Here he may be thoroughly inſtructed unto every good work, comforted in every Affliction, encouraged againſt every Fear, guided and directed in every Difficulty.

WE

WE need not ſeek after ſome remote and foreign Oracle to have our doubts reſolved, as the *Gentiles* did of old, whoſe coſt and pains was commonly rewarded with ſome dark, ambiguous Sentence, which did them more harm than good. How happy would they have thought themſelves, had their opportunities of learning Wiſdom been comparable to what we find in our Churches! where we may have daily Communion with God in the ſpiritual Sacrifice of Prayers and Praiſes, and turn our thoughts to the contemplation of his heavenly Kingdom, and feed our Souls with that immortal Food which nouriſhes them to everlaſting Life.

THESE advantages are the portion of every Chriſtian; the meaneſt of us may *come freely, and drink* of theſe ſtreams of heavenly Wiſdom *without money, and without price:* Which is ſuch a Proviſion for the inſtruction of the Poor, as was never known before the preaching of the Goſpel. The Schools of the Philoſophers had no ſuch Treaſures of Knowledge to communicate, nor any way to make their Doctrines ſo univerſally known, for the edification of all ranks and conditions of People.

BUT now it is too viſible in our daily Experience, that theſe opportunities of acquiring divine Wiſdom, and growing in the Knowledge, Grace, and Favour of God, are for the moſt part in the hands of Fools, who have no Heart to make uſe of them.

1*ſt*, THIS appears in the want of that Zeal which ſhould bring People to the Aſſemblies of God's publick Worſhip, and inſpire them with a ſerious Devotion in all the Duties of this place. At thoſe hours which are ſet apart only for Prayers, how ſmall is the number of Worſhippers, in compariſon of thoſe

negligent ones who might find leiſure to attend them, were their ſenſe of the Duty but equal to the importance of it. At theſe more ſolemn Aſſemblies how rarely do many appear, who have little or no impediment to hinder them? And how many formal and ſuperficial Hearers are there, who are unprofitable under the means of Grace, becauſe they perform not the Duties they are about, with a ſuitable Devotion and Attention of Heart and Mind? So that in effect their opportunities and ſeaſons of Grace are loſt, for want of a juſt improvement.

2*dly*, WE are convicted of a ſtupid neglect of our Chriſtian Talent, by the errors and vices of our common Converſation. Every Chriſtian who accuſtoms himſelf to profane Swearing and Curſing, or to Calumny and Detraction, or to Atheiſtical, wanton, unſavoury Diſcourſe, is a Fool; becauſe he knows, or ought to know, that the Laws of his Religion forbid ſuch abuſes of Speech, which render him obnoxious to the condemnation of God at the laſt Day. And it is not only pious and honourable, but very eaſy and practicable for him to govern his Tongue by the rules which Chriſt has injoyned him.

FARTHER, Our bleſſed Lord aſſures us, that whatever we beſtow in works of Piety and Charity, is ſo much Treaſure laid up in Heaven. The Man then who pretends to the Faith and Hope of a Chriſtian, muſt act very impolitickly, whenever he with-holds and refuſes to contribute ſomething of his Subſtance, in proportion to his Circumſtances, upon ſuch occaſions. And yet what multitudes are there, *who have a price in their hands*, ſufficient Abilities, *to purchaſe the heavenly Treaſure*, but are ſo far from ſeeking the opportunities of it, that they ſtudiouſly avoid them, and

and turn a deaf Ear to the moſt reaſonable and moving Sollicitations, as if there were no Precepts of brotherly love in the Goſpel which they profeſs, no Promiſe that they ſhall be rewarded for all which they expend upon Chriſt and his diſtreſſed Servants; but that they were only ſo far rich and wealthy, as they laid up treaſure for themſelves and their Poſterity in this preſent Life.

3*dly*, WE many times condemn our own miſmanagement of the Talents which God has given us, and look back with much regret upon thoſe opportunities which have ſlip'd through our hands, whereby we might have entred into a nearer Communion with God, and a happier courſe of holy and virtuous living; whereby we might have prevented a great deal of work for Repentance, and have obtained a more comfortable Proſpect, and ſurer hope of our Inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven. Theſe regrets are apt to affect us more eſpecially, when we are well advanced in Years, and begin to come upon the brink of our Paſſage out of this World into another. When we grow weary of the concerns of this Life, and can take but little pleaſure in the enjoyments of it, then our Minds are moſt free from the prejudices of carnal Luſts, and we are beſt qualified to make a true judgment of our ways, wherein we have erred, and what we have neglected of thoſe things which are a foundation of ſure and everlaſting Comfort. And upon the whole we reſt in the wiſe Man's Concluſion, that *to fear God and keep his Commandments, is the beſt thing we can do for our ſelves.* But this, alas! is ſeldom the reſolution of our younger, more vigorous Years. While our ſenſual Paſſions are warm and buſy within us, we are too apt to hearken to them, *to*

walk in the ways of our Heart, and in the ſight of our Eyes, and do thoſe things which will create us melancholy reſentments at the laſt, and fooliſhly ſquander away thoſe good Days which can never be recalled, wherein we ſhould have applied our Hearts unto Wiſdom.

AND thus we have ſeen the principal Caſes, wherein God puts it into our power to improve the faculties of our own Souls, and to propagate Religion and Virtue amongſt others; and we find by experience the truth of the Remark in my Text, that the Power is often given without the Will, and that we ſuffer our opportunities to paſs away and be loſt, without improving them to any good purpoſe.

NOW, ſays the royal Preacher, *wherefore is ſuch a price in the hand of a Fool, who has not a Heart to lay it out to the beſt advantage?* This Queſtion may concern the Conduct of divine Providence; for it may import thus much: Why has God beſtowed his Talents upon thoſe Men, who pervert the deſign of them, and inſtead of doing good with them, abuſe them to their own and others detriment?

IN anſwering this Queſtion, we muſt take heed that we charge not the Providence of God with Folly; but rather humbly confeſs, that his Diſpenſations are in many reſpects unſearchable, and ſurpaſs the limits of our Underſtanding to find out the ground and reaſon of them. However, it is no offence in us to gueſs at them, and aſſign ſuch reaſons as we think moſt probable and agreeable to the divine Attributes: As

1*ſt*, THE Talents which we receive from God, are his free Gifts, and cannot of right be claimed or demanded by any of his Creatures. For we are all in his Hands, as the Clay in the hand of the Potter; *he*

may

may make one veſſel to honour, and another to diſhonour, as he ſees fit. So that while we think he diſpenſes his Benefits unequally, giving much to his Enemies, and little to his own Children, yet we cannot, upon this principle, ſay, that he does any Man wrong, becauſe he is no Man's Debtor, and conſequently we muſt acquit him of any Injuſtice in all his Diſpenſations.

BUT though it be agreeable to Juſtice, yet we are apt to think it is inconſiſtent with Goodneſs, that ill Men ſhould be poſſeſt of thoſe Talents, which might have redounded to the great benefit of Mankind, if they had been put into other hands. And indeed we blame Men for this conduct; I mean, for imploying thoſe under them who, they know, will abuſe their truſt. But we ſhall be miſtaken, and run into a thouſand Errors, if we meaſure the divine Goodneſs by the ſame rule. For at this rate we may ask, why did God, who created Man upright and immortal, ſuffer him to fall, and to bring Sin and Death, with all their train of Calamities, into the World? ſince by the interpoſal of his Almighty Power he could have hindred this. But then we muſt imagine him to have made Man a quite different Creature from what he now is, and to have given him quite other Laws from the beginning, than thoſe which are laid down in Sacred Writ: Whereas we find that he has always treated us as free Agents, beſtowing his Gifts upon us, and propounding to us the beſt arguments to perſuade us to uſe them well; but ſtill leaving our Will at liberty to act otherwiſe, if we will not, hearken to him. And this, I think, is the beſt anſwer whereby we may vindicate the Goodneſs of God in his Diſpenſations. He commits his Talents to ſuch Stewards as might make a right uſe of them; but

but they for the moſt part abuſe their truſt, becauſe their Will is contrary to the Will of their Lord. And if theſe were put out of their Stewardſhip, and others, whom we think well of, were placed in their Room and Circumſtances, yet we cannot be ſure that they would diſcharge their truſt to better purpoſe; but might juſtly fear the contrary; it being often ſeen, that Men are not the ſame in different Fortunes, and that thoſe who promiſed well in a private quiet Life, make a very untoward Figure, when called to ſuſtain any weighty Imployment.

BUT now let us ſuppoſe that a ſufficient number of ſuch wiſe and faithful Stewards could be found, as would effectually diſpenſe all the manifold Gifts of God to the benefit of Mankind; if any one ask, why they are not called of God to ſuch Adminiſtrations; I anſwer, Becauſe the World is not worthy of them.

THIS has been tryed and found in all Countries, that the beſt Magiſtrates and Miniſters have not been able to reform a profligate People; nor have charitable Works always been applied according to the Will of the Donors, but have often been ſwallowed up by the Sons of Rapine and Violence, or abuſed by the Receivers to the pampering of Luſt and Lazineſs.

SO that we have no reaſon to arraign the Goodneſs of God, for lodging his Talents in the Hands of thoſe who make no proper uſe of them: It is even a Mercy that People ſhould be denied them, and not have them to anſwer for, except they were ſurer than they commonly are, to take no harm in the enjoyment of them.

2dly, THIS Queſtion, *Why is there a price in the hand of a Fool, who has no Heart to it*, may concern the Poſſeſſor, and be thus interpreted, What will be the

the Iſſue and Conſequence of ſuch an abuſe at the laſt? And the anſwer is, That it will redound to the greater Condemnation of the unworthy Receiver at the laſt Day; according to the equitable rule of the Goſpel, that *to whom much is given, of him ſhall much be required*; and if he ſhall be found to have abuſed his large Talents, and neglected the abilities and opportunities which God put into his Hands to ſet forward his own and others eternal Welfare, his Puniſhment will be aggravated in proportion to ſuch Neglects and Omiſſions. For God, the Judge of all, will then render to every Man, not only according to his Works, but likewiſe according to his Sloth and Unprofitableneſs, and Contempt of thoſe Duties which he ought to have done, but left undone.

THIS ſhould awaken us all to a ſerious Examination of our ſelves, to ſee what Talents our great Lord has beſtowed upon us, and what Uſe we have made of them. And if it ſhall appear that we have hitherto been ſuch Fools as to neglect the proper application of the Price put into our Hands, let this reproof of the wiſe Man in my Text enter deep into our Hearts, and excite us to redeem the miſ-ſpent time and loſt opportunities of our former Life, by imploying the remainder of it with double Care and Diligence, in all thoſe good Duties which God ſhall enable us to do; that whenever he ſhall call us to give an account of our Stewardſhip, our Accounts may be ready, our Work finiſhed, and we may receive of our Lord the reward of thoſe who have approved themſelves wiſe and faithful Servants; through the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. To whom, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON CII.

On the Twenty-ſixth Sunday *after* TRINITY.

EVENING.

PROVERBS xix. 5.

A falſe witneſs ſhall not be unpuniſhed: and he that ſpeaketh lies ſhall not eſcape.

IN which words, a brief and general ſentence of condemnation is paſſed upon two ſorts of faithleſs wretches. I. Upon one who at the tryal of a cauſe in a Court of Judicature, gives in a wrong evidence, to the ſubverting of Juſtice and Judgment. II. Upon him who in his ordinary converſation accuſtoms his tongue to ſwearing and lying; who makes no conſcience of keeping his word; who roundly affirms thoſe things for truth which he knows to be falſe, or eaſily takes up injurious reports from others like himſelf, and ſpreads them abroad, when he knows he hath no good ground or foundation for them. Both theſe offenders againſt truth and juſtice are here threatned with deſerved puniſhment. Which ſometimes is viſible, in the body and eſtate; ſometimes inviſible, in the mind and conſcience: ſometimes it ſeizes immediately upon the offender; at other times it purſues

ſues him ſlowly, but yet certainly overtakes him at laſt, and exacts of him the pains of his falſhood and wrong.

I ſay, theſe workers of iniquity are always puniſhed one way or other: but it is highly neceſſary to good government, and eſſential to the very being of ſociety, that they ſhould often ſuffer ſpeedy and open correction: that thereby they may deter others from deſtroying that faith and truth which is the life of cities and ſocieties. For what are ſocieties but a mixture of wolves and ſheep, whereof the one ſort would quickly devour the other, if they were not reſtrained by good Laws? And what would Laws ſignify, if the execution of them ſhould be commonly perverted and defeated by the lying tongues of falſe witneſſes?

I believe there is nothing more frequently inculcated, from the beginning to the end of holy Scripture, than the practice of truth, juſtice, and righteouſneſs; and nothing more declaimed againſt than the contrary vices. Than which there cannot be a greater demonſtration, that theſe writings are the word of God. For God, the fountain of all our good things, is the Father of truth: and the Devil, the author of all that is deadly, is the Father of lies. By a lye, a falſe pretence of improving our felicity, he robbed us of it, and ſubjected us to his own empire, the tyrannical dominion of Sin and Death. And by the like deluſions he ſtill continues to reign over us. By lies he tempts men to be Atheiſts and Idolaters, to be vain and voluptuous, to commit murders, adulteries and robberies; in ſhort, to break the whole Law of God; perſuading them that in theſe exceſſes they will find exquiſite delight and pleaſure, whereas at the ſame time

time they plunge themſelves into the depths of miſery. And this we muſt ſay of all the Devil's Temptations, if we well conſider them, that they are but ſo many lies, contrived to cheat us with falſe appearances, and ſeduce us from our real good.

WITH the greateſt reaſon therefore it is, that the Commandments of God are called Truth, becauſe in keeping of them lie our trueſt advantages and everlaſting comforts. The obſervance of them is the only means of our proſperity and ſafety even in the preſent ſtate. When *David* ſays, *Pſalm* xix. 'The Sta-'tutes of the Lord are right, and rejoyce the heart; 'the Commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth 'light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, 'and endureth for ever: the Judgments of the Lord 'are true, and righteous altogether; and in keeping 'of them there is great reward;' this is far from being a ſally of wit, or enthuſiaſtick rapture. The common ſuffrage of all generations ſays the ſame, from the creation of the world to this day.

DO we read in the ſacred Oracles, penned near three thouſand years ago, that a falſe balance, unjuſt meaſures, lying lips, pride, cruelty, a froward heart, a ſpirit of diſſenſion, malice and revenge, are all abominable to God? We ſee the reaſon at this day, why they muſt always be deteſted by him who is the moſt gracious Maker and Preſerver of mankind, becauſe they are inconſiſtent with the being of any civil government. There is no Magiſtrate who preſides over any country, city, or little borough, who can be of any ſervice to it, if he does not take care to puniſh ſuch evil-doers, and to protect and encourage thoſe that do well.

FOR

FOR 1. Fraud in commerce and dealing, is but a ſpecies of robbery: 'tis the mother of unjuſt gain, which enriches a few with the ſpoils and damage of the community. Nor do thoſe riches continue long in the families of the unrighteous poſſeſſors, but moulder away, according to the remarks of our royal Preacher, that *treaſures of wickedneſs profit not*; that *wealth gotten by vanity ſhall be diminiſhed*; that *the poſterity of robbers ſhall ſtarve.* 2. Haughtineſs of ſpirit, how does it ſwell a man with an overweening opinion of himſelf? making him deſpiſe others as below his notice; and conſequently unfits him for thoſe offices of meekneſs, courteſy, and humanity, which make ſociety agreeable and eaſy. 3. No leſs unſociable is a tongue addicted to calumny, tale-bearing, detraction, ſupplyed with a heart which is always deviſing wicked imaginations, ſtudying how by fraud or force to gratify ſome deſire or luſt, covetouſneſs or revenge; loving to make the deareſt friends fall out, and taking pleaſure to ſee thoſe people at variance, who ſhould be moſt cloſely united in brotherly affection.

NOW it is impoſſible for men of theſe diſpoſitions not to meet with their puniſhment in their own miſchievous ways. The makers and venders of ſlight manufactures, and adulterated goods, which prove much worſe in the uſing, than what they were pretended to be, muſt quickly be found out, and loſe their buſineſs, eſteem, and reputation with that part of mankind whom they have impoſed upon. Likewiſe ſlanderers, falſe accuſers, covenant-breakers, who ſhuffle off their promiſes, and find tricks to evade thoſe obligations which they lye under, and do not care to perform, muſt needs incur that deteſtation, ſhame

ſhame and reproach which always did and always will attend ſuch dealings. Such lying lips are odious to God and men, which ſurely is no ſmall puniſhment. They are continually violating that faith and truth which are the neceſſary bonds of good government; the beſt and ſtrongeſt guards for the ſecurity of any throne; which muſt needs ſink and come to nothing, when theſe foundations fail, upon which it is eſtabliſhed.

WHEN the holy Scriptures deſcribe the adminiſtration of that Prince who was to make all nations of the earth bleſſed, they ſay, *Iſa.* xi. 4. that *he ſhall judge the poor with righteouſneſs, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth:* that *righteouſneſs ſhall be the girdle of his loyns, and faithfulneſs the girdle of his reins.* Conſequently the putting off theſe girdles, is the diſſolution of Government.

AND thus much of the violation of truth in general. I come now to ſpeak of that enormous and foul breach of it, committed by Witneſſes in Courts of Judicature, who when called to give a fair impartial evidence in any cauſe, are faulty in the delivery of it.]

IN the tryal of cauſes, ſince the party accuſed cannot be permitted to clear himſelf by his own teſtimony, he muſt be convicted or cleared by the teſtimony of others who are of his acquaintance, or privy at leaſt to the affair in queſtion. And ſuch perſons are ſworn to give a true account of all that they know about the matter, and to make ſincere anſwers to all queſtions which ſhall be asked them upon ſuch occaſions.

THIS is the only way of diſcovering the truth in tryals: It can be brought to light only by the report

report of proper witneſſes, and it can be got out of ſuch witneſſes by no ſuch effectual motive, as by charging them to declare it upon Oath. For there may happen to be ſeveral reaſons why a witneſs would not report all that he knows of a matter, if he were left to his own choice, or had no more than the face of a Court to move him to do it. The party to be caſt by his evidence, may be his near relation, friend, or benefactor; of a family at leaſt that hath done him much good, and may ſtill do him more. The perſon that ſhall gain by his teſtimony, may be a ſtranger, or one againſt whom he has ſome party, family, or perſonal grudge. In both theſe caſes he may ſuppreſs the truth, and ſpeak agreeably to his affection or prejudice, no body being able to detect him. But when he takes an oath to declare the whole truth, and to ſpeak nothing but the truth, this lays him under an obligation ſuperior to all others. For hereby he appeals to God, whom he acknowledges to be the ſearcher of hearts, to bear witneſs of his ſincerity, and to take vengeance of him if he prevaricates. So that now he has no room left to behave according to his own diſcretion, to ſhew kindneſs to one ſide or animoſity to another, but is bound in his depoſitions to have regard to the Truth only, let the conſequence be what it will. It now concerns the welfare of his ſoul and body, to be honeſt and open-hearted. His preſent and future hopes of God's mercy depend upon his veracity.

THIS is the moſt likely way to bring truth to light, and controverſies to a juſt iſſue, ſo as that queſtions of right and wrong, guilt and innocence, might be truly decided in Courts of Judicature. And therefore this way hath been generally practiſed in all go-

vernments, even in that of Gods' own erecting among the People of *Iſrael*, whom he injoyned by his Law to end their controverſies by the teſtimony of three, or at leaſt of two witneſſes. And tho' in ſpeaking of them, the Sacred Text does not expreſly ſay they were ſworn; yet when we conſider what the Scripture ſays of an Oath, how neceſſary it was for the putting an end to all doubts and diſputes, and that in caſes of this nature, the beſt men's word was not taken without it, we cannot doubt but witneſſes anſwered upon oath.

AS to the form, they were to ſwear by the living God, in truth, in judgment, and in righteouſneſs: and as for the manner of adminiſtring it, the Judge or Officer ſpoke the words to the perſon that was to anſwer him, and ſolemnly charged him to anſwer all truly upon that oath. Inſtances of ſuch adjuration we have many in Scripture. That of *Eli* to *Samuel* is very expreſs, 1 *Sam.* iii. 17. *Samuel my ſon, what is the thing that the Lord hath ſaid unto thee? I pray thee, hide it not from me. God do ſo to thee, and more alſo, if thou hide any thing from me, of all the things which he hath ſaid unto thee.*

WHETHER the Litigants were obliged to make oath of their own innocence in the cauſe to be tryed, or of any point that occurred in it, I cannot affirm. But this we find, that the *Jewiſh* High-prieſt, in the tryal of our Lord, adjured him to anſwer upon oath, whether he were the Chriſt or not; and he anſwered accordingly. And it was a rule in the Civil Law, as we learn from *Juſtinian*'s *Code*, *L.* iv. *T.* 59. that Plaintiff, Defendant, and Advocates ſhould ſwear, that they were perſuaded of the goodneſs of their cauſe, *and did not come into Court with any deſign*

to

to calumniate, or be vexatious to one another. I wiſh ſuch a Law were in force among us. It might happily prevent many ſuits and actions, where both ſides could not ſtand the teſt of ſuch an oath. I am ſure it argued a great concern to prevent them, in the Governors of thoſe times and places where it prevailed.

BUT where a cauſe is brought to a tryal, the iſſue of it chiefly depends upon the conſentient teſtimony of the witneſſes. For ſo we heard from the Law of God; and I think it is the general practice at this day, that the concurring evidence of two or three witneſſes ſhall be the ground of a man's gaining or loſing his cauſe.

WHICH being ſo, how careful ſhould witneſſes be to follow the direction of their oath, and to ſpeak the truth plainly without any colouring, and fully without ſtifling any part of it? Since the Judges ſentence, which determines of the lives, fortunes, and reputations of men, muſt be grounded upon their teſtimony! Not that they are to concern themſelves what the ſentence ſhall be. All their buſineſs is, to ſpeak the truth, that juſtice may be done, whether it be for or againſt men. This is agreeable to the will of God and the Law, and they are ſworn to do it. But I ſay, when innocent men are tryed and caſt, and puniſhed with the loſs of life or limb, eſtate or reputation, by the lying lips of falſe witneſſes, what a load of guilt do ſuch witneſſes bring upon their own heads? To ſay nothing of their Perjury, they become murderers, ſpoilers, defamers of the injured ſufferers. For all whoſe ſufferings they are accountable: for the Judge and Jury muſt go according to their proofs and allegations.

WITH great propriety therefore *Solomon* calls the man that bears falſe witneſs againſt his neighbour, *a mawl, and a ſword, and a ſharp arrow*, *Prov.* xxv. 18. He is indeed every thing that is deadly and deſtructive. And in another place, *Prov.* xviii. 21. he ſays, *Death and life are in the power of the tongue.* The good or harm which it can do is ineſtimable. By a falſe charge it deſtroys men, and ſaves them by teſtifying the truth.

ON the other hand, a prevaricating witneſs who delivers his evidence ſo, as to acquit him who would have been condemned, if the truth had been told, hereby becomes the occaſion of an infinite deal of miſchief. He defrauds the right owner of his eſtate or money, and gives it to one who hath no right to it. He reſcues malefactors from the hand of Juſtice, which had laid hold of them, perhaps for murder, and ſo contracts a guilt in the blood which they had ſhed; perhaps for robbery, or ſome other abominable crime, and ſo lets looſe wolves among the ſheep, and makes himſelf in a great meaſure accountable for all the murders, robberies and crimes which they ſhall commit afterwards. Briefly, he is an enemy to that Juſtice and Judgment which ought to reign upon Earth, and diſappoints the intent of all good Laws, divine and human, which were intended to be a terror to evil-doers, and a praiſe and protection to thoſe that do well.

FROM all this we ſee the reaſon of the ſentence contained in my Text, why a falſe witneſs ſhould not be unpuniſhed. Now let us ſee what ſort of puniſhments the Laws of God and men have allotted for him.

And

And *Firſt*, I obſerve, that in the moſt ſacred part of the divine Law, I mean the Decalogue, there is an expreſs prohibition, which ſays, *Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs againſt thy neighbour.* And preſently after, it was enacted, *Deut.* xix. 16. that if the Judges diſcovered any man bearing falſe witneſs againſt another, they ſhould inflict the ſame pains upon him, as the accuſed ſhould have ſuffered, had the allegations proved true. And leſt the Judges ſhould prove too tender to execute this ſentence upon the falſe witneſs, the great Legiſlator commands poſitively, ſaying, *Thine eye ſhall not pity, but thou ſhalt do to him, as he thought to have done to his brother; life ſhall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, limb for limb.* If ſcourging was the penalty of the crime alledged, he was to receive the ſame number of ſtripes; if the loſs of a ſum of money, he was to be fined the very ſame ſum. *So*, ſays the Text, *ſhalt thou put away the evil from among you, i. e.* the crime of falſe witneſs, by this publick puniſhment of it, will not become a national guilt. And others will take warning by it, and be deterred from committing the like villany another time.

Secondly, AMONG the *Athenians* an action lay, not only againſt a falſe witneſs, but alſo againſt the party who produced him. Upon both they ſet a fine, and they were made infamous. And if they were found thrice guilty of this crime, not only they, but their poſterity were made infamous throughout all generations.

Thirdly, THE puniſhment of falſe witneſs among the old *Romans*, by the Law of their twelve Tables, was, to caſt the criminal headlong from the top of the *Tarpeian* Rock. Afterwards, by a Law called *Lex*

Remmia, falſe witneſſes were ſtigmatized in the face with the Letter K, denoting them to be calumniators. When the Emperors became Chriſtians, falſe accuſers were puniſhed with infamy, baniſhment, and ſuch others pains as they would have brought upon the accuſed party, if their charge had proved true; as we learn from ſeveral places of the Imperial Codes. By the Eccleſiaſtical Laws theſe offenders were excommunicated, and put to the ſame long and ſevere penance with murderers, robbers, or otherwiſe, according to the import and miſchievous effects of their falſe witneſs.

Fourthly, BY our own Statute Law, 5 *Eliz. c.* 9, it is declared, that 'if any perſons, either by ſubornation or their own act, ſhall wilfully and corruptly commit perjury by their depoſition in any of the Queen's Courts, or being examined *ad perpetuam rei memoriam*, every ſuch perſon ſhall loſe 20 *l.* and be impriſoned by the ſpace of ſix months, and his oath ſhall not be received in any Court of Record, until the Judgment ſhall be reverſed. And if ſuch offender ſhall not have goods or chattels to the value of 20 *l.* he ſhall be ſet on the pillory in ſome market place, where he ſhall have both his ears nailed, *&c.* As to his forfeiture, the one moiety ſhall be to the Queen, the other moiety to ſuch perſons as ſhall be aggrieved.' By other Acts the impriſonment of the inſolvent offender is to be in the Houſe of correction for twelve months.

THIS is a ſhort ſpecimen of ſuch human penalties as have been awarded to falſe witneſſes, conſidered as peſts of mankind, and enemies of the Laws and Government of the reſpective communities to which they belong.

BUT

BUT if either thro' the neglect of the Magiſtrate, or for want of proſecution, or of ſufficient proof to convict them of their crime, they ſhould receive no correction from the hand of man; yet they muſt not hope to eſcape that wrath of God, which he hath threatned to thoſe that take his name in vain, after ſo provoking and groſs a manner.

FOR however they may hold the place and bear the character of honeſt men in the buſineſs of the World, yet God who ſeeth not as man ſeeth, hath aſſured them that he will not hold them guiltleſs; and their own conſcience, which is inſtead of a thouſand witneſſes, will not acquit them.

WHEN the People complained in *Malachi*'s time, ii. 17. ſaying, *Every one that doth evil, is good in the ſight of the Lord:* or in the words of *Solomon, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to him that ſweareth raſhly and falſely, and to him that feareth ſuch an oath*; and cryed out upon it, *Where is the God of Judgment?* God anſwered them by the ſame Prophet, iii. 5. *I will come near to you in Judgment, and I will be a ſwift witneſs againſt falſe ſwearers.* To this purpoſe he ſhewed the Prophet *Zachary* the Viſion of a Flying Roll, twenty cubits long and ten broad; and told him, *This is the curſe that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that ſtealeth, ſhall be cut off on this ſide, according to it; and every one that ſweareth, ſhall be cut off on that ſide. I will bring it forth, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, and it ſhall enter into the houſe of the thief, and into the houſe of him that ſweareth falſely by my name: and it ſhall remain in the midſt of his houſe, and ſhall conſume it, with the timber thereof, and the ſtones thereof.*

THE Prophet *Hoſea*, who was cotemporary with *Iſaiah*, cries out to the men of his generation, Chap. iv, ſaying, 'Hear the word of the Lord, ye Children 'of *Iſrael:* for the Lord hath a controverſy with the 'Inhabitants of the Land, becauſe there is no truth 'in it. By ſwearing, and lying, and killing, and 'ſtealing, and committing adultery (which is always 'aggravated with perjury) they break out, and blood 'toucheth blood. Therefore ſhall the Land mourn, 'and every one that dwelleth therein ſhall languiſh, 'with the beaſts of the field, and with the fowls of 'Heaven, yea the fiſhes of the ſea alſo ſhall be taken 'away.' After him, *Jeremiah* who ſaw the cities and fields of his Country laid waſte by the *Chaldeans*, ſays, that raſh and falſe ſwearing was one of thoſe crying ſins which had brought them into that mournful condition, *Jer.* xxiii. 10. Upon which place a learned Commentator of our own obſerves, That 'the *Jewiſh* 'forms of adjuration, uſed in their Courts of Juſtice 'for the diſcovery of the truth, had uſually an im-'precation joyned with them: and that the words 'here referred to, import, that men ventured to for-'ſwear themſelves, and incur the imprecation, rather 'than diſcover the truth in caſes of theft and ſuch 'like crimes, wherein they were called upon to be 'witneſſes.' Such curſes doth the violation of Sacred Truth bring upon mankind in their temporal concerns.

AND how it forfeits our title to the ſpiritual mercies of God in Chriſt, we may hear from the Fathers of our Church, in that Homily which they have compoſed for us upon this ſubject. 'When, ſay they, 'men laying their hands upon the Goſpels, do ſwear 'truly to enquire, and to make a true preſentment of 'things

'things wherewith they are charged, and not to for-
'bear ſpeaking the truth, and acting truly, for favour,
'love, fear, or malice of any perſon, as God ſhall
'help them, and the holy contents of that Book:
'They muſt conſider, that in that Book is contained
'God's everlaſting Truth, his moſt holy and eternal
'Word, whereby we have forgiveneſs of our ſins,
'and are made Inheritors of Heaven, to live for ever
'with God's Angels and Saints in joy and gladneſs.
'In the Goſpel likewiſe are contained God's terrible
'threats to obſtinate Sinners, that will not amend
'their lives, nor believe the truth of God's holy
'Word, and the everlaſting pain prepared in Hell for
'idolaters, hypocrites, for falſe and vain ſwearers, for
'perjured men, for falſe witneſſes, for falſe condem-
'ners of innocent and guiltleſs men, and for them
'which for favour hide the crimes of evil-doers, that
'they ſhould not be puniſhed. So that whoſoever
'wilfully forſwear themſelves upon Chriſt's holy Goſ-
'pels, they utterly forſake God's mercy, goodneſs,
'and truth, the merits of our Saviour Chriſt's Nati-
'vity, Life, Paſſion, Death, Reſurrection, and A-
'ſcenſion, they refuſe the forgiveneſs of Sins, pro-
'miſed to all penitent Sinners, the Joys of Heaven,
'the communion of Angels and Saints for ever. All
'which benefits and comforts are promiſed to true
'Chriſtians in the Goſpel.'

MAY theſe words effectually awaken us all to a ſerious conſideration of the oaths, vows, and obligations of duty which we lie under to God and man; that we may bewail our misfortune, if at any time we have ſworn or vowed any thing raſhly, unadviſedly, or againſt the judgment and perſuaſion of our Conſcience; that we may repent of any treſpaſs we have

have committed in the matter of a lawful oath, in any truſt or office that we have taken upon us; if we have been too apt to omit things which ſhould have been done, and to do thoſe things which we ought not to have done; if we have not been ſo true in our words, nor ſo upright in our dealings as the Laws of juſtice and righteouſneſs require; let us henceforth ſanctify the holy and reverend name of God, by abſtaining from raſh and vain ſwearing, and faithfully performing all lawful oaths, vows and promiſes; let us be ſincere and faithful in our dealings, putting away lying, and ſpeaking every man truth to his neighbour, as being members of the ſame body. So will the God of truth be nigh unto us in all that we call upon him for; he will be true to his promiſes in pardoning our ſins, and will open the Gates of his holy Habitation to ſuch faithful Servants, thro' the merits of the Lord our Righteouſneſs, *Jeſus Chriſt*; To whom, *&c.*

SERMON CIII.

On the First Sunday *in* ADVENT.

MORNING.

ISAIAH i. 11.

To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the Burnt-offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beasts, and I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-Goats.

THE time of this Prophecy is denoted by the names of four Kings in the first Verse, *viz. Uzziah*, *Jotham*, *Ahaz*, and *Hezekiah*, Kings of *Judah*; of whom the third reigned at that time when *Israel* was carried away captive by *Salmaneser* King of *Assyria*, and the fourth had notice given him by this very Prophet of the approaching Captivity of *Judah* by the *Babylonians*, which came to pass about one hundred and thirty Years after.

THE Author of it is thus accounted for by the *Jewish* Doctors, and ancient Christian Writers, that he was of the royal Family, his Father *Amos* being a younger

younger Brother of *Amaziah* King of *Judah*; that therefore, having had a princely Education, his Style is moſt refined, and his Conceptions ſtrong and lofty above others: That his Subject is very copious, comprehending *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*; ſo that there is ſcarce any thing to be found in other Prophets, which is not well treated of by him. That he hath propheſied of Chriſt and his Church ſo particularly, that his Diſcourſe looks more like a Hiſtory of Things paſt, than a Prediction of that which was to come. St. *Jerom*, who had often read him and conſidered him very carefully, ſays, *he deſerves the Name of an Evangeliſt rather than of a Prophet*; and indeed he is oftener quoted throughout the New Teſtament, than any one of the reſt of the Prophets. By Paſſages out of him the Goſpels are ſo enlightened, that the evangelical Expoſitors muſt underſtand *Iſaiah*, and the Interpreters of *Iſaiah* muſt underſtand the Goſpels at the ſame time. For he tells how Chriſt ſhould be born of a pure Virgin, ſhould be ſought out, and adored by the wiſe Men of the *Gentiles*; and our Lord's preaching, working of Miracles, Paſſion, Death, Reſurrection, Aſcenſion, and coming to Judgment at the laſt day, are not ſo much recited by him in Words, as drawn to the Life in a very exact Picture; ſo that his Prophecy deſerves in a ſpecial manner that Title of a *Viſion* which he gives it. He is full, not only of the prophetick, but apoſtolick Spirit, and we might venture to call his Diſcourſe, *the Goſpel according to Iſaiah*.

FOR this reaſon it is, that this Book, by ancient and immemorial Cuſtom, is appointed to be read in our Churches at this Seaſon of the Year, as being the beſt Preparative for the *Advent* of our Lord, the Foundation

dation of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, the Pourtraiture of the Nature, Perſon, and Offices of the Meſſiah, and of the great things, which he hath done and ſuffered for us.

FINALLY, this Prophet is ſaid to have enjoyed a long Life, even the Space of one hundred and twenty ſix Years, as he well might, living four Kings Reigns, and part of a fifth, I mean that of *Manaſſes* Son of *Hezekiah*, under whom he ſuffered Martyrdom, being ſawn aſunder, according to the conſtant Tradition of the *Jewiſh* Rabbins; to which St. *Paul* is by the unanimous Conſent of Interpreters ſuppoſed to allude, *Heb.* xi. 37. where mentioning the various Deaths of the ancient Saints of God, he ſays, *they were ſtoned, they were ſawn aſunder*, &c. *Tertullian* interprets the firſt of *Jeremiah*, and the ſecond of *Iſaiah*, and St. *Jerom* ſays, the truth of this is not to be queſtioned: Whence the *Roman* Martyrology has this Note on the 6th of *July*: *This Day the holy Prophet Iſaias was martyred by a Saw, at the Command of King Manaſſes.* And the Chronicle of *Alexandria* has the like Record, with this Addition, that he ſuffered after he had propheſied ninety Years, and was buried under an Oak in *Rogelim.*

CORNELIUS à Lapide, in his Commentary on this Prophet, has repreſented his Effigies at length in an elegant Sculpture. And in the corner of the Table there is his Figure again in miniature, with two Men holding a Saw over him: This the Author ſays he copied from an antient fair Book in the *Vatican* Library, which formerly belonged to *Baſilius Porphyrogennetus* Emperor of *Conſtantinople*, while it was Chriſtian, in the tenth Century. And this I mention to ſhow, that the *Greek* and *Latin* Churches have conſtantly

ſtantly held this Opinion concerning the death of this Prophet.

NOW that which provoked King *Manaſſes* and his wicked Miniſtry to inflict this horrible Death upon *Iſaiah*, was undoubtedly the Prophet's free and impartial Reproof of them, which galling their guilty Conſciences, enraged them with mortal Hatred a-gainſt him. This Generation had filled up the meaſure of their Fathers Iniquities (as we learn from the Hiſtory of thoſe Times) 2 *Kings* xxi. and 2 *Chron.* xxxiii. where it is ſaid, that *Manaſſeh ſet up the Idols which his Father Hezekiah had thrown down, and worſhipped the whole Hoſt of Heaven, and did according to all the Abominations of the Heathen.* And whereas his Predeceſſors had kept their Idols at a diſtance, in high Places and Groves, he brought them into the very Temple of God, which had been ſo religiouſly dedicated by King *Solomon* to his Preſence and Worſhip. Moreover *he cauſed his Children to paſs through the Fire to Molech; and uſed Enchantments, and dealt with familiar Spirits and Wizards; and filled Jeruſalem with innocent Blood, which he ſhed in it, from one end to another.* And to ſum up all, both King and People added Hardneſs of Heart, and Contempt of God's Word and Commandments, to the reſt of their Provocations. For it is particularly noted, that *the Lord ſpake to them, but they would not hearken.*

UPON all theſe Enormities the Prophet animadverts in this very firſt Chapter of his Prophecy. He upbraids their Inſenſibility of the Divine Bleſſings, with the Example of *the Ox who knows his Owner, and the Aſs his Maſter's Crib.* He taxes them with ſuch a deſperate Spirit, as grew more miſchievous under Corrections. He calls them *Rulers of* Sodom, *and People*

People of Gomorrah; and the Hiſtory of their Manners juſtifies this Appellation. He tells them, *their Hands were full of Blood*, and we have ſeen what reaſon he had to tell them ſo. Laſtly, he reproves them for their Hypocriſy and Partiality in Religion. *To what purpoſe is the multitude of your Sacrifices unto me, ſaith the Lord? I am full of the Burnt-offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beaſts; I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-Goats.*

WHICH words are not to be underſtood abſolutely, but comparatively, and with reſpect to the Manners of theſe Men.

For I*ſt*, GOD could not abſolutely reject Sacrifices, becauſe they were of his own appointing, as we are abundantly certified in the Books of *Exodus* and *Leviticus*. And they were inſtituted for very good Purpoſes. 1*ſt*, As federal Rites between God and this People, that by eating of what was offered upon his Altar, they might profeſs their Union and Communion with him, that they were of his Family, he their Father, and they his Children. And this is what made Idolatry ſo odious to him, and for which he declares himſelf a jealous God, that when they ſacrificed to Idols, they made the ſame Acknowledgments to them.

2*dly*, SACRIFICES were inſtituted to expiate Sins of Ignorance, and Treſpaſſes of an inferior nature. For as to Sins committed preſumptuouſly, and out of Defiance to the Divine Majeſty, and Contempt of the eſtabliſhed Laws, the Offender was not within the compaſs of ſuch Propitiations, but was doomed to ſuffer Death without Mercy. But for Sins of Inadvertence and daily Incurſion, ſuch as Men generally pious and endued with the Love of God

and

and their Neighbour might be ſurprized with, the Divine Legiſlator was pleaſed to accept of theſe Sacrifices for an Atonement. It is true, St. *Paul* in his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* affirms, *that it was impoſſible that the Blood of Bulls and Goats ſhould purify the Conſcience*, ſo as to waſh away the Guilt of Sin, which only can be atoned for by *the Lamb of God, ſlain from the foundation of the world*. But yet they availed to the purifying of the Fleſh, and were accepted of God in lieu of temporal Puniſhments. So that they might be properly ſtyled a Propitiation.

3*dly*, SACRIFICES were deſigned to teach Men, *that without ſhedding of Blood there could be no Remiſſion of Sins*. They were hereby led to conſider, that infinite Juſtice properly required the Life of the Offender, but that infinite Mercy accepted of a vicarious Life, the Beaſt's inſtead of the Man's. The Sinner was hereby admoniſhed of the true Demerits of his Offences, and adviſed to take heed of repeating his Treſpaſs, leſt a worſe thing ſhould happen to him.

4*thly*, PEACE-OFFERINGS, or Sacrifices of Gratitude were offered to God, in hope of obtaining ſome Favour, or as a Thankſgiving for having received ſome ſignal Mercy from him. The firſt ſort were called *Salutary*, the ſecond *Euchariſtical*. Beſides theſe for publick Feſtivals, there were ſome alſo of a private nature, devoted to God either by a Vow, to obtain ſome Bleſſing; or elſe voluntary, to return Thanks for Favours received. The firſt were of indiſpenſable Obligation; in the latter, Men were left more to their liberty. There are in Scripture numberleſs Inſtances of theſe two ſorts of Sacrifices. Among the Peace-offerings we may rank that of the

Paſchal

Paſchal Lamb; and that of the Firſt-born, whether Man or Beaſt. The Firſt-born of Male Children were offered to God as a Memorial of his having ſpared the Firſt-born of their Fore-fathers in the Land of *Egypt:* but they were redeemed with Money, and the price of their Redemption given to the High-Prieſt. The Tythes of Herds and Flocks were alſo conſecrated to God, as a Thankſgiving for his having bleſſed the Cattel.

LASTLY, Sacrifices were inſtituted for Types and Repreſentatives of that final Sacrifice of the Son of God, in whom they all centred and were conſummated. Who therefore is introduced in the fortieth Pſalm, thus ſpeaking to his heavenly Father. *Sacrifice and Offering thou wouldſt not; but a Body haſt thou prepared for me: in Burnt-offerings and Sacrifice for Sin thou haſt had no pleaſure: then ſaid I, Lo, I come to do thy Will, O God.* St. *Paul*, in commenting on theſe Words, *Heb.* x. ſays, *he takes away the firſt*, i. e. the legal Offerings, *that he might eſtabliſh the ſecond*, i. e. the Sacrifice of himſelf, and conſequently he calls *the Law our Schoolmaſter, to bring us to Chriſt*; and Chriſt the End of the Law, becauſe it was ended in him and by him. In this Senſe it is, that our Lord affirms, *he came not to deſtroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them.* He fulfilled the moral Law by his perfect Holineſs and Virtue, and the Law of Sacrifices by his Death and Paſſion.

FROM all this I infer, what I aſſerted before, That God does not reject Sacrifices as ſuch; for he ordained them by his own Authority, for excellent Ends, as I have ſufficiently made it appear. And therefore we muſt conclude in the

II*d* place, THAT his Averſion to them was occaſioned by the ill Manners of thoſe that offered them, who had no Concern to accompliſh the good Ends which were intended by them, nor conſidered that by theſe Sacraments they laid themſelves under renewed Obligations to be ſenſible of their own Demerits, to repent and reform whatever they found amiſs in their Lives, and to abound in the Love of God, and the Fruits of his holy Spirit. It appears from the Characters of theſe Men, eſpecially in their latter and worſt Times, that they ſatisfied themſelves with the *opus operatum*, the external Duties of Religion, and had no Regard to the Renovation of their Hearts and Minds. I doubt not but *Hezekiah* and *Joſiah*, who endeavoured to reform them, were Princes of very ſincere and ſpiritual Piety, and they did very well in reſtoring the external Forms of God's Worſhip, from the Superſtition and Idolatry which had over-run it. Which was the utmoſt they could do. For they could not change the Hearts and Affections of Men, which I am afraid were generally alienated from God and Goodneſs, after all that theſe pious Kings had done for them. You have heard what a Character *Iſaiah*, who ſaw *Hezekiah*'s Reformation, gives of their Morals in this Chapter; and afterwards he calls them *a People who drew nigh to God with their Mouth, and honoured him with their Lips, while their Heart was far from him.*

SO that it is plain, that inſtead of anſwering the end of their Sacrifices, which ſhould have led them to the Love of God, and the Imitation of his Holineſs, they hoped to appeaſe him, and compound with him for a profane, profligate Life, by abounding in theſe

theſe kind of Offerings, which was indeed directly to croſs the true Deſign and Meaning of them.

THIS is what provoked God to declare, that he nauſeated thoſe Sacrifices which were offered him by ſuch vile Hands and impure Hearts. For though they were of his own Inſtitution, yet he takes all Opportunities to aſſure us, that he prefers inward Holineſs, and Works of Piety and Charity far above them, as being the End, for the Attainment of which he had appointed theſe Ways and Means. And therefore *Moſes*, their great Director in Sacrifices, aſſures them *Deut.* x. 12. *that God required nothing of them in compariſon of this, that they ſhould fear him, ſerve him, and love him, with all their Heart, and with all their Soul.*

AGAIN, we hear that when King *Saul*, contrary to the Divine Command, had ſpared the beſt of the Flocks and Herds of the *Amalekites*, as a rich Offering for God, *Samuel* affirms to him, *that his Obedience had been much more acceptable than his Sacrifice, and his hearkening to God's Word ſweeter than the fat of Rams.*

AND his Succeſſor King *David*, when he had committed thoſe grievous Sins in the caſe of *Uriah*, penitently acknowledges, that he would have offered any Sacrifice, if God had required it, but that he knew he delighted not in Burnt-offerings. *The Sacrifice of God*, ſays he, *is a troubled Spirit, a broken and a contrite Heart he will not deſpiſe.*

LIKEWISE *Aſaph*, the Author of the fiftieth Pſalm, who perhaps lived in *David*'s time, introduces God as ſitting in Judgment upon *Iſrael*, and willing to paſs over the Omiſſions of Sacrifice, but very much inſiſting on Prayers and Thankſgivings. *I will not re-*

prove thee, ſays he, *for thy Sacrifices, or complain that thy Burnt-offerings were not always before me. But offer unto God Thankſgiving, and pay thy Vows unto the moſt High; and call upon me in the day of trouble; ſo will I hear thee, and thou ſhalt praiſe me.*

TO proceed; *Solomon* in his Proverbs tells us more than once, *that the Sacrifice of the Wicked is Abomination to the Lord. Jeremiah* chap. vii. ſays, *That God gave his People Precepts of Obedience, before he commanded any thing about Sacrifice and Burnt-Offerings. Amos* chap. v. 22. certifies the Hypocrites from the Mouth of God, *that he deſpiſed their Sacrifices, and would have no regard to the Peace-offerings of their fat Beaſts. Micah* declares, *that to do juſtly, and love Mercy, and walk humbly with God, is more pleaſing to him than thouſands of Rams, and ten thouſand Rivers of Oyl.*

AND thus, in going over *Moſes* and the Prophets, we plainly ſee that the ſpiritual and moral part of the Law, makes far greater weight in the Balance of God's Sanctuary, than the Rituals of it. The ſpiritual Part may ſubſiſt and live without Externals; but Externals are but a Phantom or dead Carcaſe without the ſpiritual. That Devotion is certainly beſt, where they are conveniently joyned; and we may ſay of them as our bleſſed Lord ſaid of a Caſe very much like this, *that while we are doing that which is the moſt eſſential part, we ſhould not leave the other undone.* We know where Rites and Ceremonies are ſo multiplied, that they even choke the Spirit of Religion; but when they are ſo moderate in their number, and ſo well adapted in their uſe, that they adorn and enliven the Worſhip of God, they are then not only allowable, but very valuable and deſireable.

WE

WE have indeed in my Text, and in many other Sayings of the Prophets, ſuch an Idea given us of *Jewiſh* Sacrifices, as if they were really abominable to God; which in their Nature I have ſhown they could not be: and by the divine Inſtitution they were made a Duty. But I ſuſpect that the *Jews* by their own voluntary Additions had over-multiplied the Number of them, or ſome way corrupted them. I am ſure they placed too much Confidence in them, and ſo by their abuſe rendred them diſtaſteful to God, as having made them Hindrances rather than Helps to true Piety, and ſo quite perverted his Deſign in them.

BY their Example let us be admoniſhed to worſhip God in Spirit and in Truth; while we obſerve that there is no Inſtitution of Religion, but what may be ſo corrupted both in Doctrine and Diſcipline, as to become unworthy of the Divine Majeſty, and fit to be aboliſhed. The Religion of the *Jews* was of ſuch divine Original, that it could not but be moſt acceptable to God the Author of it, and juſtly demanded high Veneration from all its Worſhippers. But when they came to prefer a ſuperficial Zeal above ſanctified Affections, and works of Piety and Charity; when they held it a main part of Devotion to cry out, *The Temple of the Lord*; when they prophaned their Temple with Idols, and offered their Sacrifices with lewd Hearts and Hands imbrued in innocent Blood, as the Prophet here taxes them, then the Divine Preſence and Power forſook them, and left their Temple and Altar, as fit for nothing but the Fire of the *Babylonians*. The like Preparatives made way for the Ruin of their ſecond Temple. It ſtood near four hundred Years in a peaceable and proſperous Condition. But when they polluted it, by making a Mar-

ket in it of thoſe very Creatures which were to be ſacrificed on its Altar; when they turned it into a Garriſon in their civil Diſſenſions, and ſhed the Blood of their Brethren in the midſt of it; when they delivered up the Lord of it to the Power of the *Romans*, in order to preſerve it out of their Hands; it remained then *to be purged by Fire:* the judgment of any intelligent Man would have cenſured it, as utterly unfit, after ſo many horrid Prophanations, for any farther Service of a holy God.

AND if hence we deſcend to the Chriſtian Churches in the *Eaſt*, we ſhall find them laid in Ruins by the Sins of the Worſhippers. *Arianiſm*, *Neſtorianiſm*, *Eutychianiſm*, and I know not how many Hereſies under other Denominations, had quite eaten out the Heart of genuine Chriſtianity. Jeſus Chriſt was loſt in the Number of fictitious Mediators, whoſe Images had filled every Corner of their Churches. The Sacraments were ſo diſguiſed and clogged by additional Matter, that they could not have been known by the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles. And this Corruption of Faith was parallel'd by a Diſſolution of Manners, and the Chriſtian was become deſtitute even of Humanity, and grown more brutiſh than the Infidel. All which, by the juſt Judgment of God, ended in the ſuperiority of the *Saracens*, and the prevalence of the *Turkiſh* Moſques over the Churches unworthy of Chriſt.

THESE examples, I ſay, ſhould be a Warning to us, if we have any eſteem for our Chriſtian Religion, to perſuade us to hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith as it was at firſt delivered to us; to confeſs our Lord before men, to be that Son of God, whom his own Doctrine, and the conſent of his Apoſtles affirm him to be; and to deny all Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſt

Luſt, and order our Converſation as becomes the Goſpel of Chriſt.

Finally, LET us praiſe God for ſhewing us thoſe things which many Kings and Prophets of old have deſired to ſee, even the Kingdom of his dear Son, whereof he hath made us living Members, and by him delivered us from the Guilt and Puniſhment of thoſe Sins, which we could not be freed from by the Law of *Moſes*. Let us praiſe him, that he hath redeemed us from thoſe tedious Ceremonies, and coſtly Sacrifices, which the wiſeſt of the *Jews* complained were a burden, that neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear. Above all, let us magnify his infinite goodneſs, for promiſing to appear a ſecond time to compleat our Salvation, by raiſing us out of our Graves, and faſhioning our Bodies like to his own glorious Body, and exalting us unto thoſe celeſtial Manſions which he is now preparing for us, and where we ſhall ever live with him, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, *&c.*

SERMON CIV.

On the First Sunday *in* ADVENT.

EVENING.

ISAIAH ii. 19.

And they ſhall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majeſty, when he ariſeth to ſhake terribly the Earth.

THE fear of God, and the ſhame of ſinning, are ſentiments which nature has engraven in the heart of man, on purpoſe to keep him within the bounds of virtuous courſes, and to check him whenever he finds himſelf tranſgreſſing thoſe bounds. There is no ſinner who does not feel the ſtirrings and reluctance of theſe principles at the firſt approaches of any vitious temptations: And therefore when he is reſolved to embrace them, he does his utmoſt to ſtifle the fear of God, and conceal himſelf from the notice of the World. And by the power of infidelity, and the veil of hypocriſy, he is commonly too ſucceſsful in the ſubduing of his own virtue.

BUT

BUT how ſhort, alas, and vain is his triumph! The day of the Lord is coming, when the gloomy covering of infidelity and hypocriſy ſhall be diſſipated, and ſin ſhall appear in its native deformity; when that ſhame and fear which could not reſtrain it, ſhall become its eternal plague and torment. For ſuch will be the revelation of the laſt day: The terrible Judge will ſtrike ſuch a trembling and confuſion into the ſoul of the guilty ſinner, as will fully revenge his former contempts; and ſo expoſe all his abominations before Angels and men, that his hypocritical arts and colourings will but redound to his greater ſhame. Then will he be glad *to hide himſelf in the rocks and caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majeſty.* Which words will give us occaſion to conſider the penal fear and ſhame which I am ſpeaking of.

AND *Firſt*, It is ſome alleviation of a man's misfortune, if he knows the worſt of it. For the fear and apprehenſion of evil is ſometimes worſe than the evil itſelf. But this rule holds good only in temporal evils. There is no room for it in thoſe which are infinite and eternal, always preſent, and always to come, which will be the condition of all reprobate Spirits.

IN the preſent ſtate of things, men can harden their hearts againſt all the threatnings and terrors of the Lord: and have ſo accuſtomed themſelves to diſpute and disbelieve every thing which is ſupernatural, that the concerns of another World make but faint impreſſions upon them. But in hell there is no ſuch incredulity: *The very Devils believe and tremble.* They are like guilty priſoners, who live under continual apprehenſions of the appearance of the Judge, the ſentence of Condemnation, and the hand of the Executioner.

tioner. For tho' they are now under a ſtate of reprobation, yet the meaſure of their puniſhment is not yet filled up: They are reſerved unto the Judgment of the laſt day, when their furnace ſhall be heated ſeven times hotter than ever it was before. This they know will certainly be their doom, and they tremble at the proſpect of it.

BUT yet ſuch is their enmity to mankind, that they labour all they can to make Infidels of all our World, and would have no man to trouble himſelf with the thoughts of a judgment to come; but to live without care, and die without fear, like the beaſt that periſheth.

IN this the policy of the Devil is moſt directly oppoſed to the Wiſdom of God: For if he can but perſuade men to live without any concern about a future State, he knows how effectually this will deſtroy the whole ſyſteme of Religion, and leave men to the entire purſuit of their own covetous and carnal paſſions, to do every thing that is right in their own eyes.

FOR this is the reaſoning of the wiſe *Solomon*, that a young man might ſecurely rejoice and indulge himſelf in every youthful luſt, and walk in the ways of his heart and ſight of his eyes without reſtraint, were it not for this apprehenſion, that God will one day enter into judgment with him, and puniſh him for his contemptuous tranſgreſſions of the divine Law. It is the frank confeſſion of the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, that if a *Chriſtian* had nothing to hope or fear beyond this life, it would be much wiſer and happier for him to live like other men. For to what purpoſe ſhould he expoſe himſelf to bodily ſufferings, if he has nothing but a body to take care of? or why ſhould he neglect

any

any thing of his portion of good things, if he is to receive the whole of it in this life?

THE great foundation therefore on which the ſubſtance of our Religion is built, is the belief of that day when God ſhall call men to an account for all the works which they have done in this life, and ſhall deal with them according to the promiſes and threatnings of his own word. Thus the Goſpel treats with us, not as bare citizens of this world, but as creatures who are to be happy or miſerable to all eternity in a future ſtate. Which certainly is the moſt powerful motive that can be offered to us, to ſtir us up to care and circumſpection, that we may ſo order our preſent converſation, and ſo conform our thoughts, words and actions to the rule of God's word, that when we come to be tried by it, we may be found faithful in our obedience to it.

THE way not to be afraid of the wrath of God then, is to ſtand in awe of it now. For firſt or laſt we muſt unavoidably be affected with the dread of it. And they that can live without the fear of God in this world, ſhall be filled with the terrors of the Lord in the day of his vengeance, when his wrath ſhall be revealed from Heaven. At preſent it is diſcovered but in part: yet theſe leſſer diſcoveries of it, have been ſtrong enough to ſhock the moſt daring Atheiſts. *At the voice of thy thunder they are afraid*, ſays the holy Pſalmiſt: And indeed this kind of manifeſtation of the Deity has driven them into the holes of the Rocks and the caves of the Earth. *Ariſtotle*, who knew no more of Religion than what Nature teaches, affirms, that *to out-brave the thunder is not a ſign of fortitude, but of fool-hardineſs and madneſs.* And we ſee what horrors of conſcience ſome grievous ſinners labour under,

under, without any external cauſe to occaſion them; ſo that their ſoul chuſes ſtrangling and death rather than life. This ſhews what God can do, and how eaſy it is for him to ſtrike terror into the moſt hardned ſinner, even while he does but apprehend the weight of God's diſpleaſure.

THIS, we muſt confeſs, is not the caſe of ſinners in general. Many there are who offending with a high hand, and as it were in defiance of the God of Heaven, ſeem to have no remorſe or check upon them, and affect to go out of the world as fearleſs and undaunted as they have lived in it, accounting it unmanly, and a ſign of a mean ſpirit, to be afraid of any thing.

BUT why ſhould theſe be exempted from the pangs of a guilty conſcience more than the other? It is very certain they ſhall not. For tho' their ſins do not find them out, and clamour in their conſciences here; tho' the fury of God's wrath do not burn up their blood and ſpirits in this life, that is nothing. The time is ſo ſhort, it is not worth reckoning. God will ere long ariſe, and terribly ſhake the Earth; he will even ſhake theſe proud ſinners out of their graves, where they would be glad to lie hid and be forgotten to all eternity: And when they are thus raiſed, they will run about like wild beaſts, ſeeking to ſhelter themſelves in any holes and caves from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his Majeſty, who in that day will be glorified over all his enemies.

SUCH a viſitation is neceſſary to manifeſt the power of God, and the impotence of the Creature. It was the complaint of religious men of old; *Lord, how long ſhall the ungodly, how long ſhall the ungodly triumph! how long ſhall all wicked doers ſpeak ſo diſdainfully,*

fully, and make such proud boasting! The insolence of Atheism is such, that it defies the justice of God for a time, so that his servants are forced to fly before it, and importune him to arise and vindicate his own cause. And indeed his threatnings would be but empty words, were they not certainly to be fulfilled, either in the conversion of the reclaimable, or the destruction of incorrigible sinners.

HE hath declared that he hath an extraordinary indignation at proud men, *i. e.* such as have no regard for his Laws, and that he will one day effectually humble and abase them. The world hath not always seen this done; but all the world shall be sure to see it done at last. And then that glory of God which is now eclipsed and run down by triumphant impieties, shall shine out in its full lustre. To see these sons of violence, who could not be convinced nor wrought upon by the preaching of God's word, who would not see him in his works of Creation and Providence; who would not acknowledge him as a Father in his mercies, nor as a Judge and Master in his corrections; to see these inflexible spirits bowed down at the last, to see them trembling before that God whom they had scorned and denied, and casting about their once haughty looks to spy any hole where they might hide themselves from him; this will be an entire glorification of the divine Majesty, and give full satisfaction to all his Saints, when they shall behold their great Master thus putting his and their enemies under his feet.

SINCE then we must of necessity fear God sooner or later, either with the reverence of dutiful children, or with the horror of damned and reprobate Spirits, what need we to ask counsel of any, or deliberate upon

upon a matter which is ſo eaſily determined? the preſent fear being mixed with love, and improveable to the greateſt delight; the other having a venomous alloy of hatred, and attended with endleſs torments. When we fear God as a merciful and gracious Father, we live eaſy in his Family, and rejoice in his Preſence; but a guilty fear cauſes us to fly from him like our firſt parent, dreading him as juſtly provoked to be angry with us, and ready to execute his threatned judgments upon us. Briefly, if we fear God as dutiful children, we ſhall be ſure to hate thoſe things which are diſpleaſing to him, and ſo hate as to forbear and avoid them, and conſequently keep our minds free from that guilty fear which puts a diſtance between us and our God.

THE fear of the Lord, ſays *Solomon*, *is the beginning of wiſdom*; and I will venture to add, that it is the end of it too; for a man can never be denominated wiſe one moment without this fear; whenever he lays it aſide, he certainly plays the fool. Whatever tranſgreſſions the wiſeſt and beſt of men have at any time been guilty of, they have committed them only then when they have been deſtitute of this fear: And have not recovered their former character, till they have fallen down, and humbled themſelves before God, and confeſſed that it was the moſt grievous and deplorable kind of folly, to depart from him. *Happy therefore*, ſays the ſacred Oracle, *is the man that feareth always:* And it deſcribes the wiſe man as always influenced and directed by this fear, and reckons the preſumptuous, haughty, and high-minded in the number of fools. *A wiſe man*, ſays he, *feareth and departeth from evil; but a fool rageth, and is confident. A prudent man foreſeeth the evil, and hideth himſelf; but the ſimple paſs on, and are puniſhed.*

THIS

THIS indeed is the grand characteriſtick of a wiſe man, to be provident of the time to come, and ſo vigilant over his preſent actions, that they may not give him occaſion to repent of them in the iſſue. This is a conſtant rule in the management of temporal affairs. But it holds more ſtrongly in Religion, becauſe the conſequences are of infinitely greater moment. Any man who believes the day is coming when God ſhall ſit in judgment upon him, and reward or puniſh him to all Eternity, according to his obſervance of the divine Law in this life, muſt be an arrant fool, and act contrary to all the maxims of common prudence, if he is not careful to know what this divine Law is, and ſo attentive to his own life and converſation, as to govern himſelf by the directions of it. Becauſe it is a concern of the laſt importance; his work on which his reward depends, is confined to this preſent life; no farther day will be allowed him for it. So that if when he is called hence, he be found wanting, he will be miſerable to all Eternity.

AND the ſame wiſdom will ſhew a man the neceſſity of being humble, and living in the fear of God. It will ſhew him how unable he is to reſiſt the temptations wherewith he is ſurrounded, and diſcharge the duties of his ſtation and calling, whatever it be, except he be diligent in his Prayers and ſuch other religious Exerciſes as are appointed by God for obtaining the grace and aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit. For by ſuch exerciſes alone will he be able to affect his mind with a juſt awe and regard of the divine Majeſty. By frequently hearing the hiſtories of God's Saints, and their wiſe ſayings and grave admonitions, he will keep up in himſelf a quick ſenſe and diſcernment between the nature of good and evil: He will

perceive

perceive the imperfection of his beſt ſervices, and be the more careful to avoid all groſs offences, as knowing how apt he is to offend daily in leſſer matters, and how much he falls ſhort of that exactneſs, which it were to be wiſhed he could attain to in his obedience of God's Laws.

THERE is no man who by daily reading and hearing of God's word, keeps the rule of his life in his eye, but he muſt ſee that he has manifold reaſons to be humbled for not acting up to it; and cry out with the holy Pſalmiſt, *Who can tell how oft he offendeth? If thou Lord ſhouldeſt be extream to mark what is done amiſs, who may abide it?* What is the reaſon that there is ſo little true fear of God in the world, but becauſe men, generally ſpeaking, are ſo negligent to acquaint themſelves with him, and are ſo over-run with infidelity, that they neither believe he now calls upon them for that obedience which is preached to them, nor will reckon with them about it at the laſt day. If they had but a lively apprehenſion and thorough convictions of the truth of theſe points, that God is the Legiſlator and Judge of the World, and that the holy Scriptures are the ſyſteme of his Laws, then we ſhould quickly ſee another face of things; the influence of his fear would effectually reſtrain the far greateſt part of the enormities, which abandoned men are daily committing with all ſecurity and greedineſs.

BUT this, alas, is a happy ſtate, which hath never yet been ſeen, and it is to be feared never will be till the day of Judgment. And then indeed all men ſhall fear God, but not to their happineſs; it ſhall be part of the puniſhment of the wicked that they ſhall fear him ſo as to wiſh themſelves at the greateſt diſtance from

from him, ſo as to be utterly buried in oblivion, and forgotten of him. The ſupports which now ſet them above his fear, will then fail them. The ſilver and gold in which they put their confidence; the port and dignity which they bear in the world; their great relations, friends, and ſervants, which cauſe them to think highly of themſelves, will then appear as ſo many cyphers and ſhadows which cannot profit them. *In that day*, ſays our Prophet, *ſhall a man caſt his idols of ſilver and his idols of gold*, and indeed whatſoever he had idolized, *to the moles, and to the bats. And the loftineſs of man ſhall be bowed down, and the haughtineſs of men ſhall be made low: and the Lord alone ſhall be exalted in that day.*

AND as horrible fear, ſo ſhall ſhame and confuſion of face be the portion of all thoſe, who will not now be reſtrained by a virtuous modeſty from offending againſt God. Such a modeſty is implanted in the nature of man on purpoſe to keep him back from doing thoſe things which are unſeemly and of evil report, inſomuch that he is aſhamed and bluſhes, not only when ſuch doings are diſcovered in him, but even when he is ſuſpected of them. But it is well known that ſome men, by accuſtoming themſelves to ſinning, can ſhake off all the reſtraints of modeſty, and practiſe the moſt vile and brutiſh luſts with openneſs and freedom, as if there were nothing in them but what was honeſt and worthy to be done.

NOW ſuch people having abandoned themſelves to a ſhameleſs courſe of living here, not regarding the Laws of God or Man, it is very meet that the ſhame which ſhould have prevented their puniſhment, ſhould at laſt become a part of it; and that thoſe who were blind to their ſpiritual deformities here, ſhould at laſt

be made ſo ſenſible of them, that they would be glad to be buried and for ever locked up in any hole or corner of the univerſe, that no eye might ſee them.

AND thus I have ſhown how unavoidable it is for every one of us, firſt or laſt, to be affected with the paſſions of fear and ſhame. If we will be ſo affected with them now in this life, as to be withheld by them from ſinning againſt God, they ſhall not be our puniſhment hereafter. But if we will caſt them off here, and chuſe to herd with the ſcorners of God's word, and the deſpiſers of virtue, we ſhall be dreadfully affected with them at the laſt, when they ſhall be no longer curbs to preſerve our virtue, but fiends and furies to plague us for our impudent enormities.

LET us then wiſely make choice of theſe reſtraints in due ſeaſon, and keep up their influence ſo ſtrong in our minds, that no ſinful temptation, even in the cloſeſt retirement and moſt ſecret corner, may ever be able to prevail againſt them. Then ſhall we not be aſhamed or afraid to meet our Lord in the glory of his Majeſty, *when he ariſeth to ſhake terribly the earth*; but ſhall lift up our faces with joy, as knowing that it is the day of our Salvation, that we are ready to be delivered from all objects of terror and amazement, into the joy of our Lord, and ever live with him in that ſecure and happy Kingdom where he liveth, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON CV.

On the Second Sunday *in* ADVENT.

MORNING.

ISAIAH v. 1, 2.

Now will I ſing to my well-beloved a ſong of my well-beloved touching his Vineyard: my well-beloved hath a Vineyard in a very fruitful Hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the ſtones thereof, and planted it with the choiceſt Vine, and built a Tower in the midſt of it, and alſo made a Wine-preſs therein: and he looked that it ſhould bring forth Grapes, and it brought forth wild Grapes.

HITHERTO the Prophet had framed his diſcourſe to the People in a proper, plain, and familiar ſtyle; now he changes it into parable and allegory; though he doth not keep them long in ſuſpenſe, nor leaves them to gueſs at the Moral of it. For he fairly unriddles it at the ſeventh verſe: *The Vineyard of the Lord of Hoſts*, ſays he, *is the Houſe of Iſrael, and the men of Judah his pleaſant Plant: and he looked for Judgment, but behold Oppreſſion; for Righteouſneſs, but behold a Cry*

THE main deſign of this Parable then is, to reprove that generation of men to whom it was ſpoken, for their unfruitfulneſs under the beſt means of divine Grace. But though this main deſign is very clear, yet there are ſeveral things in the words of my Text which require farther Explanation; which I will endeavour in order.

And 1*ſt*, IT is natural to ask, Who is this that ſays, *I will ſing a ſong*, or utter a Parable compoſed as a Song, or pleaſant narrative, *to my Beloved?* I take theſe words to be ſpoken, not in the Perſon of *Iſaiah*, but of God the Father to his Son our Lord, who in the Evangelical ſtyle is called, *the beloved Son of God, in whom he is well pleaſed.* But how can the Church of thoſe times be called *the Vineyard of the Son?* I anſwer, Becauſe as the Father created all things by him, ſo by him he has always governed all things, and more eſpecially his Church. Whereunto agrees that of St. *Paul*, *That Chriſt accompanied the Iſraelites in the Wilderneſs*; and that of St. *Peter*, *that the Spirit of Chriſt ſpake by the Prophets.* As to the Name, it is indeed aſcribed to him in theſe Sayings, by way of Prolepſis or Anticipation: For properly ſpeaking, he was not *the Chriſt*, 'till he appeared in our Nature, and executed the Office of the *Meſſiah*. But in his divine capacity, as he is the eternal Son of the Father, he preſides over all things, *God bleſſed for evermore*, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks, and has always had the peculiar care and conduct of the Patriarchs and choſen People of God.

WHETHER this Doctrine agree with the Sentiments which later *Jews* have entertained of the *Meſſiah*, I am not at preſent concerned to enquire. It is ſufficient for us that it was the perſuaſion of the beſt

of

of the *Jews* in the Apoſtles days, as we have proved from the two chief of them, St. *Peter* and St. *Paul:* In which they were ſo much followed by the primitive Chriſtian Fathers, that their writings are full of this Doctrine, that the Laws and Ordinances of the *Jewiſh* Church were given to *Moſes by the hand of this Mediator.* Upon this account no doubt it was, That *Malachi* ſtyles him *the Lord of the Temple* four hundred years before his Incarnation, and this dominion we find him aſſerting over it, by driving with a miraculous force the prophane Huckſters out of it.

ACCORDING to theſe Authorities we may with good Senſe allow the *Jewiſh* Church to be called here in my Text *the Vineyard of the Son of God*; and this without the Abſurdity of conſounding the Moſaick and the Chriſtian Diſpenſations together: for nothing is properly Chriſtian but what was eſtabliſhed by the Son of God after his Incarnation, whereby he became *Chriſt* or the *Meſſiah.*

2*dly*, THE Church of God is ſtyled *a Vineyard*, which is a very pertinent reſemblance of it. For as a Vineyard is a plot of ground ſeparated from common field and paſture, in order to be improved with ſuch cultivation, as that the Vines and Grapes it produces may ſupply the Owner with generous Wines: So God's Church conſiſts of a People ſelected and choſen by him out of the reſt of the World, that they may worſhip him by the Laws and Rules of his own revealing, and ſo exerciſe a purer Religion, and abound in the Fruits of good living, above other men, who have not the light of the ſame Revelation, nor direction of the ſame Laws.

THIS ſimilitude of a Vine, or Vineyard, for the juſtneſs of the reſemblance, is ſeveral times uſed to

denote the Church. *Thou haſt brought a Vine out of Egypt*, ſays the Author of Pſal. 80. which was writ in the ſame Age with this of *Iſaiah*, *thou haſt caſt out the Heathen and planted it. Thou madeſt room for it, and when it had taken root, it filled the Land. The Hills were covered with the ſhadow of it; and the boughs thereof were like the goodly Cedar trees. She ſtretched out her branches unto the Sea*, the Mediterranean, *and her boughs unto the River* [Euphrates.] All which is an Allegory, intimating that God delivered *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, and planted them in *Canaan* to ſerve him. Thus our bleſſed Saviour compares the Kingdom of God, *i. e.* the Church, to a Vineyard, into which he the Owner ſent Labourers, *i. e.* Miniſters, to cultivate it, *i. e.* to improve the Piety and Virtue of the People by their Miniſtry.

NOW if any curious Enquirer ſhall think fit to demand, why God choſe ſuch a ſmall pittance of the Earth as *Canaan*, for his Spiritual Vineyard, the lot of his Inheritance, where only he communicated the knowledge of himſelf; I need only anſwer to the fact, That ſo it was, and infer from thence, that it was juſt and right. I confeſs this is contrary to a Maxim in our Schools, where it is held a wrong way of arguing, that becauſe a thing is or has been done, therefore it may be lawfully done. But this can only preſcribe to human actions; for in the divine Oeconomy 'tis good Logick to ſay, This God hath done, therefore 'tis juſt; becauſe *the Judge of all the Earth muſt needs do that which is right.*

AND that he was known in *Jewry*, and made his name great in *Iſrael*; that he confined his Tabernacle to *Salem* and his Temple to *Sion*, where alone he could be acceptably worſhipped, is ſo plainly and frequently

frequently aſſerted in Holy Scripture, that it cannot be unknown to thoſe who peruſe it.

AND if the Patrons of natural Religion will ſay, that other Nations which were not of God's Vineyard, ſerved him acceptably in following the beſt light they had, they ſay that which is a flat contradiction to the whole current of Sacred Writ: and if they call it Partiality thus to prefer one People before another, they calumniate the Juſtice of God, whoſe Revelation of himſelf to fallen man is a matter of meer Grace and Favour, and not any thing which he is obliged or bound to do for us. To *Abraham* and his Seed indeed he had promiſed it, and by virtue of his Promiſe was bound to perform it.

3*dly*, THIS Vineyard is ſaid to be *ſituate in a very fruitful Hill*, alluding to the Land of *Canaan*, which was a high-raiſed, and a very fertile Soil: agreeable to the character which *Moſes* gives of it, *Deut.* xxxii. 13. *The Lord*, ſays he, *made Iſrael to ride upon the High places of the Earth, that he might eat the increaſe of the fields, and he made him to ſuck Honey out of the Rock, and Oyl out of the flinty Rock: Butter of Kine, and Milk of Sheep, with fat of Lambs, and Rams of the breed of Baſhan, and Goats with the fat of kidneys of wheat, and thou didſt drink the pure blood of the Grape.* The ſame *Moſes* commonly calls it *a Land flowing with Milk and Honey*, and *the Crown and Glory of all Lands.* St. *Baſil* mentions it as a very ancient Tradition, that *Adam*, after he was caſt out of Paradiſe, choſe to live in this Countrey, as that which came neareſt to his former ſtate of Happineſs. And *Gen.* xiii. when *Abraham* offered to *Lot* the choice of his Paſture in this Countrey, it is ſaid that *Lot lift up his Eyes and beheld all the Plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every*

where, even as the Garden or Paradiſe *of God.* For this we have the concurring Teſtimonies of *Greek* and *Roman* Hiſtorians, when they write of *Syria* and *Meſopotamia*; and modern Travellers report, that even in its preſent ſtate, under the *Turks* Government, who commonly carry Ruin and Deſolation where-ever they go, the Fruits of *Paleſtine* are very plentiful, and of excellent taſte and ſpirit. Theſe are the reaſons which the Prophet had to ſay, as he does in my Text, that *the Vineyard was placed on a very fruitful Hill.*

4*thly*, GOD made a Fence round about it: *i. e.* he diſtinguiſhed his People from all other Nations by peculiar Laws, Statutes, and Obſervances, not only in Religion, but even in civil Life, in their very Diet and Converſation, ſo that it was impoſſible for them to remain *Jews*, and to accompany freely with the reſt of the World, as other People do. He alſo fenced them with a miraculous Protection from the Invaſions of their Adverſaries, which border'd upon them on every ſide; ſo long, I mean, as they were obedient and faithful to God their Protector: for otherwiſe indeed they were often ravaged by Armies of the *Philiſtines*, *Ammonites*, *Aſſyrians*, *Babylonians*, and other powerful Enemies that were let looſe upon them. Which is a ſign that they often broke Covenant with God, and thereby rendred themſelves obnoxious to the Armies of Aliens, which during their Obedience could never hurt them. For God, to manifeſt his Power in giving them Peace and Safety, obliged all their Males, their Soldiers not excepted, to go and worſhip at *Jeruſalem* three times every year, and bid them not be concerned for their Poſſeſſions in their abſence, for he would not ſuffer their Enemies to enter any of their Coaſts. And this Promiſe he conſtantly

ſtantly performed; beſides many other inſtances of his Providence over them, either in diverting their Enemies, when they were arming againſt them, or deſtroying them when they were actually among them: Of which the Sacred Hiſtory affords us many Examples. To which I ſhall add one of a more modern date: I mean the turn which was given to *Alexander*'s deſign againſt the *Jews*, as it is related by *Joſephus* Antiq. xi. 8. where he tells us, 'That *Alexander* the '*Macedonian*, in the courſe of his Wars againſt the '*Perſians*, reſolved upon the deſtruction of the *Jews* 'at *Jeruſalem*, becauſe they adhered to their Alliance 'with the *Perſians*. At the ſame time *Jaddus*, their 'High-Prieſt and chief Governor, was warned of 'God in a dream, to go out with the reſt of the 'Prieſts, all dreſt in their proper Habits, and meet 'the *Macedonians*; which accordingly they did. *Alex*-'*ander*, as ſoon as he came within full view of them, 'ſtept forth from his Army, and proſtrated himſelf 'at the High-Prieſt's Feet. At which when his 'Friends were amazed, and demanded the reaſon of 'it, he aſſured them, that a Perſon, with juſt ſuch 'Features and Dreſs as *Jaddus*, had appeared to him 'in a Viſion, at the beginning of his Wars, and told 'him he ſhould ſucceed and become Maſter of the 'Empire of *Perſia*.' And this turn'd him from his hoſtile Reſolution, to treat the *Jews* with the kindeſt Affection, and offer them all the favours which he could do for them. This their deliverance was plainly ſupernatural, and the effect of God's watchful Providence over them.

THERE is therefore no abſurdity in our Prophet, when chap. xx. 6. he calls *Canaan* an Iſland. For though it lay upon the Continent, yet was it ſafer from

from Invaſions, by the protection of the Almighty, than if it had been begirt by any Sea, as a Wall about it.

5thly, GOD cleared the Soil of this Vineyard from Stones; not indeed in the literal ſenſe; for this Country pretty much abounds with Rocks and Flints, which are ſo far from being always prejudicial, that they are ſerviceable, not only for Walls and Buildings, but even for ſome parts of Agriculture. But this is a proper continuation of the Allegory, that as Stones ſhould be caſt out of a Vineyard, ſo God caſt out the *Amorites* and ancient Inhabitants of *Canaan*, to make room for the Children of *Iſrael*. And with them he caſt out their Idols, made of Wood and Stone, and demoliſhed the Temples dedicated to Idolatry, that his own People might have no ſtumbling-blocks left in their way, but might be wholly turned to his Service.

6thly, HE planted it with the choiceſt Vine, the true Religion, and form of Government both Eccleſiaſtical and Civil, which he had revealed from Heaven. He made excellent proviſion for the Inſtruction of his People, and the promulgation of his Will and Pleaſure among them. The Tribe of *Levi* and Lineage of the Prieſts was very numerous, and ſufficient to teach *Jacob* God's Judgments, and *Iſrael* his Laws; and beſides theſe, he ſpake to them in extraordinary caſes, by a Voice from Heaven, or by the Mouth of his Holy Prophets. And he enforced the obſervance of his Laws with very conſiderable Rewards and Puniſhments. Capital Executions were ſpeedily to be done upon all ſuch as blaſphemed God, or went about to pervert others from his Worſhip. Great Revenues were ſettled for the maintenance of it, amount-

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ing in Tythes and all kind of Offerings, to little leſs than a fifth part of the product of that rich Country. All the Habits, Furniture, and appendages of this Religion, were of the richeſt and beſt Materials, to add the greater Luſtre to its Holineſs, and excite Men to the greater reverence of the divine Majeſty.

JUSTLY therefore does the Prophet affirm, *that God planted his Vineyard with the choiceſt Vine*; he did not communicate himſelf to other Nations, *neither had the Heathen knowledge of his Laws.*

BRIEFLY, the *Tower* and *Wine-preſs* which God ſet up in the midſt of this Vineyard, were the *Temple* and *Altar* which he erected for the Devotions of his People; for after much cultivation of his Vineyard and choice of his Vine, he juſtly expected a plentiful product of the beſt kind of Grapes; but was recompenſed for all his coſt and pains with no better than the ſower Fruits of wild, uncultivated Nature; *Grapes of Sodom, and cluſters of Gomorrah*, as he complains, *Deut.* xxxii. And he gives us a ſample and taſte of them in ſome of the following Words.

HE looked for judgment, but behold oppreſſion; for righteouſneſs, but behold a cry. The great increaſe of their Fields and Flocks wherewith he had bleſſed them, afforded them ſufficient means of rendring thoſe dues to Religion, and Loving-kindneſs to their Neighbours, eſpecially to the more indigent ſort, which by many ſacred Laws and ſerious Exhortations he had injoyned.

BUT inſtead of being led by the divine beneficence to works of Liberality and Charity, they only ſtudied how to ſacrifice to their inſatiable Luſts and lewd Affections.

SOME

SOME were poſſeſt with the fiend of Covetouſneſs, and were continually encroaching upon the rights of their Neighbours, to engroſs all to themſelves, *joyning Houſe to Houſe, and Field to Field*, till there was no room left for others to dwell near them, that they might be placed alone in the midſt of the Earth, and command far and wide round about them.

OTHERS conſumed all upon their Bellies, and wallowed in all manner of Senſuality: *They were mighty to drink Wine, they roſe up early to follow ſtrong Drink, and continued at it till Night, till they were enflamed* and quite infatuated by it, *and the Harp and the Viol were in their Feaſts*, that thereby they might baniſh all ſerious thoughts, and have no regard for the Works of God, nor the Operations of his Hands, no reflection upon the Affronts they were offering him in his own Bleſſings, and how much they diſhonoured both themſelves and their Maker by theſe Abuſes.

A third ſort were ambitious of preheminence and ſuperiority in all places of Government, and Seats of Judicature. For the obtaining of which they made great oſtentation of their Parts and Abilities: *they were wiſe in their own Eyes, and prudent in their own Sight.* And thinking that if they kept within the bounds of Truth and Honeſty, they ſhould loſe the advantages of a crafty ſubtile Wit, which they took to be the great Talent of Politicians, they made bold to invert the Order which God had ſettled in things, and painted in ſuch Colours as to make Evil paſs for Good, and Good for Evil, Light for Darkneſs, and Darkneſs for Light, Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter. And though they could not perſuade all Men to renounce common Senſe, and be of their Mind; yet they would ſo argue and reaſon, and pour out their

their words with ſuch an air of ſeriouſneſs and gravity, as cauſed many to admire them, and become their Proſelytes.

NOW theſe covetous, lewd, ambitious Men, abounding in number, as the Prophet complains, filled all places with the fruits of their Unrighteouſneſs. As for the Tythes and Offerings dedicated to Religion, they thought it no robbery to detain them, as *Malachi* complains. If they had occaſion for the labour of poor Men, if they had any Truſt to manage for the Fatherleſs and Widow, if they were to buy or ſell any thing, whatever commerce or dealing they had with others, they made no ſcruple to oppreſs and circumvent, by all ways and means, by lying, and perjury, and perverting of Juſtice and Judgment, and taking away the lives of the innocent, if they could do it to advantage; and all this to make proviſion for their Luſts, and feed their lewd Affections. *They juſtify the wicked for reward*, ſays our Prophet, *and take away the righteouſneſs of the righteous from him.*

AND to harden themſelves in their wicked Practices, they reſolved to be Infidels in all divine Matters; and when the Prophet told them, they were making work for the Judgments of God, and raiſing an Army of *Chaldeans* and *Babylonians* againſt their Country, *Well*, ſaid they, *when theſe things come to paſs, we will believe you. Let him make ſpeed, and haſten his work, that we may ſee it; and let the Counſel of the Holy one of Iſrael draw nigh and come, that we may know it.*

SUCH were the Manners of the *Jews* for many Years before their Captivity, particularly at this time when *Iſaiah* propheſied. And therefore with good reaſon God tells them, and appeals to themſelves for the

the juſtice of it, that he would take away the hedge of his Vineyard, and lay it open to be waſted and trodden under Foot. *And it ſhall not be pruned nor digged, but bring forth Briars and Thorns; and I will command the Clouds, that they rain no Rain upon it.*— 'And becauſe you have abuſed your Plenty, by Covet-'ouſneſs and Luxury, I will puniſh you in that where-'in you have offended; your great and fair Houſes 'ſhall ſtand empty and without Inhabitant; ten A-'cres of the Vineyard ſhall yield but one Bath, *i. e.* a 'Gallon of Wine for an Acre of Ground; and the 'Seed of an Homer ſhall yield an Ephah, which is no 'more than the tenth part of what was ſown; to cor-'rect your ſacrilegious Covetouſneſs in refuſing to give 'me my Tythes and Offerings.'

'AND whereas you challenge me to make good 'my threatning, in ſending victorious Armies to over-'run you, *I will but hiſs to the Nations*, that is, give 'them but a ſlight ſignal, and they ſhall come ſwiftly 'from the ends of the Earth.' *None ſhall be weary, nor ſtumble among them: none ſhall ſlumber nor ſleep, neither ſhall the girdle of their loyns be looſed, nor the latchet of their ſhoes be broken.*

AND thus I have ſhown in what a ſpecial manner God bleſſed his People *Iſrael* with all Bleſſings, Spiritual and Temporal; how they abuſed his Gifts, and turned his grace into Wantonneſs; how he threatned to viſit their ſins with his Judgments; and the Iſſue and Execution of his Threatnings we all know.

THE proper application of all this to our ſelves, is briefly hinted by St. *Paul*, *Rom.* xi. 21. *if God ſpared not the natural Branches, take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not thee.* We who ſucceed them in the ſpiritual Vineyard, the Church of the true God, have no reaſon to flatter

our

our ſelves, that our bad Fruits ſhall be more indulged than theirs. But rather the Judgments which have befallen them, will make our diſobedience the more inexcuſable, if we commit the ſame Sins, and are not afraid of the ſame Puniſhments.

THAT which ripened them for Deſtruction was, that they crucified the Son of God, when he came to demand of them the Fruits of his Vineyard. For which reaſon he hath caſt them out, and placed us in their room, to the Intent that *we might render him his fruits in due ſeaſon*. Let us not prove as unjuſt, rebellious Servants as they were: *let us not crucify the Son of God afreſh*, by blaſpheming his Perſon, or deſpiſing his Ordinances: But let us make a worthy and thankful uſe of the Means of Grace which he vouchſafes us, reverently attending upon his holy Word and Sacraments, that we may be filled with the Fruits of his Spirit, and finally may be tranſplanted hence by a bleſſed Reſurrection and glorious Aſcenſion into his heavenly Kingdom, where we ſhall for ever enjoy the Fruits of our Obedience, even the Salvation of our Souls, thro' his Merits who *is the true Vine, and we are the Branches*, and becauſe he liveth, we ſhall live alſo. To him with, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON CVI.

On the Second Sunday *in* ADVENT.

EVENING.

ISAIAH xxiv. 1.

Behold, the Lord maketh the Earth empty, and maketh it waſte, and turneth it upſide down, and ſcattereth abroad the Inhabitants thereof.

IT is obſervable, that the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament abound more with the denunciations of God's temporal Judgments than Favours to the World; which is no argument that the Prophets were moroſe men, or haters of mankind. For they ſpake no otherwiſe than as they ſaw things repreſented in their ſpiritual Viſions. And indeed any man may, without a Spirit of Prophecy, ſee that the ſtate of this World will be always more miſerable than happy, becauſe it ever was, and ever will be more vicious than virtuous: and vice will always be productive of calamity, ſo long as Death is the wages of Sin.

NOW if it be demanded whether the Prophecy before us concern the Land of *Iſrael*, or the Countries round

round about it, whoſe deſolation *Iſaiah* had threatned in the foregoing Chapters; I anſwer, it may well be underſtood to comprehend them all. And whereas he had ſet forth the impending fate of particular Countries before, he now ſums them up all together in this Chapter, which begins with the words of my Text, *Behold, the Lord maketh the Earth empty*, &c.

IN which words the Prophet repreſents the nature of the calamity which ſhould come upon the Land, together with the efficient cauſe or author of it, and the means whereby it ſhould be brought to paſs.

I. THE nature of the calamity is, the *emptineſs* or deſolation of the Earth. Which being the common parent and nurſe of all living Creatures, there is a great pleaſure in ſeeing fruitful fields, gardens, and green paſtures, becauſe they are tokens of a good number of Inhabitants, and do as it were offer us all the neceſſary proviſions and comforts of life. On the contrary, a long proſpect of deſart and barren ground is very diſagreeable to the eye, becauſe it preſents us with the ghaſtly picture of Famine, with the apprehenſion of Savage Beaſts and Robbers, and with that ſolitude and want of human Society, which is naturally horrid and odious to us.

AND therefore the threatning to make a Land waſte and barren, is one of the rods which God holds over the heads of people, to make them ſtand in fear of him, and keep them to the obſervance of religion and virtue. Accordingly we often meet with this threatning in the Law and the Prophets. *Curſed is the ground for thy ſin*, ſaid God to *Adam: Thorns and Thiſtles ſhall it bring forth unto thee.* 'If thou wilt not 'fear the name of the Lord thy God, and obſerve to 'do all the Laws which he hath given thee, ſays

'*Moſes* to *Iſrael*, *Lev.* xxvi. 19. the Lord ſhall make
'your Heaven as iron, and your Earth as braſs. Thou
'ſhalt carry much ſeed out into the field, and ſhalt
'gather but little in: for the locuſt ſhall conſume it.
'Thou ſhalt plant vine-yards and dreſs them, but ſhalt
'neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes;
'for the worms ſhall eat them. Thou ſhalt have
'olive-trees throughout all thy coaſts, but thou ſhalt
'not anoint thy ſelf with the oyl: for thy olive ſhall
'caſt its fruit. All thy trees and fruit of thy Land
'ſhall the Locuſts conſume. *Deut.* xxviii. 38.'

II. THE Author or efficient cauſe of ſuch deſolation, is God. For *it is the Lord*, ſays the Prophet here, *who maketh the Earth empty and waſte, and turneth it upſide down.* And therefore this calamity does not happen by any blind chance, or the agency of meer natural cauſes. There were indeed of old, and there always will be a generation of ungodly men, who ſay, *The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.* 'Thick
'clouds are a covering to him, that he ſeeth not, and
'he walketh or confineth himſelf in the Circuit of
'Heaven. Do not all things happen promiſcuouſly
'to good and bad men, to the clean and unclean, to
'the pious Worſhipper and the Atheiſt, to him that
'ſweareth falſely, and to him that feareth an oath?
'What then is the Almighty to us, that we ſhould
'ſerve him? and what profit is there in praying to
'him? what advantage ſhall we have, if we keep his
'Commandments, and walk carefully before him?'

SUCH is the language of atheiſtical men, who deny the Providence of God: And ſuch notions I fear many entertain in their hearts, who do not ſpeak them out with their lips. We ſee that even men profeſſing religion, do commonly paſs over the occurrences of the

the World with little regard, as if there was nothing of the hand of God in them to order and direct them. But all the principles of religion, and the ſayings of the beſt and moſt obſerving men in all ages, call loudly upon us to look up to God as the ſupreme Governor of this World, and the Diſpenſer of the preſent as well as future rewards and puniſhments of mankind. *David* ſays that all the Elements and powers of nature hear God's voice, and fulfil his word; and the Son of *David*, our bleſſed Lord, aſſures us, that not a ſparrow falls to the ground without the will of God, and that he numbers the very hairs of our heads.

NOW if the Divine Care and Providence extend to ſuch minute and almoſt worthleſs things as theſe, how much more reaſon have we to believe that he has the ordering and diſpoſing of all greater matters? and what a ſlight do we put upon him, how do we rob him of his honour, when we let things paſs as the effects of fortune or chance, and are not led by them to pray to God, to fear him, to adore and magnify him for the wonders that he doth among the children of men?

III. LET us conſider the means or ſecond cauſes whereby God makes a Land waſte, and turns it upſide down. The moſt eminent of theſe cauſes are, peſtilence, ſword, fire, unſeaſonable weather, and noxious creatures; by which means the Inhabitants are impoveriſhed, deſtroyed, ſcattered abroad, and their community is finally diſſolved.

Firſt, PESTILENCE is one of thoſe calamities which is inflicted by the hand of God, as his Judgment upon a ſinful People. Thus he threatens *Iſrael* in caſe of diſobedience, *Deut.* xxviii. 58. 'If

'thou wilt not obſerve this Law, then the Lord will 'make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy 'ſeed, even great plagues, ſore ſickneſſes, and of long 'continuance. Moreover he will bring upon thee all 'the diſeaſes of *Egypt*, which thou waſt afraid of: Alſo 'every other ſickneſs and plague, not written in this 'Book, will he bring upon thee, 'till thou be de-'ſtroyed.' This threatning was ſeveral times executed upon the rebellious *Jews*. And their Rulers were ſo ſenſible that it was an immediate ſcourge from Heaven, that they applied not medicines to cure it, but had recourſe to religious atonements for the removal of it. Thus when multitudes died on the occaſion of *Korah*'s Rebellion, *Aaron* took a Cenſer and put incenſe on it, and ſtood between the Living and the Dead, and the Plague was ſtayed. Again, when this People were ſtruck with the like diſtemper after they had been numbered by *David*, he preſently built an Altar, and offered ſacrifice to God for them, whereby they were healed.

THESE two caſes I have mentioned to ſhow, that Peſtilences were eſteemed to be the immediate Scourges and Judgments of God.

Secondly, WAR is likewiſe another method which God takes to waſte and overturn a People: As he threatens in the forementioned xxviii. of *Deuter.* 'The 'Lord, ſays he, ſhall cauſe thee to be ſmitten before 'thine Enemies: thou ſhalt go out one way againſt 'them, and flee ſeven ways before them. A Nation 'ſhall come againſt thee from afar, from the ends of 'the Earth, a Nation of a ſtrange language and fierce 'countenance, which ſhall not regard the perſon of 'the old, nor ſhew favour to the young. He ſhall 'eat the fruit of thy Cattle and of thy land, 'till

'thou

'thou be deſtroyed: He ſhall not leave thee corn, 'wine, or oyl, or the increaſe of thy kine, or flocks 'of thy ſheep. And he ſhall beſiege thee in all thy 'Gates, till he have thrown down all thy high and 'fenced walls wherein thou truſtedſt, throughout thy 'Land.' How this was executed upon diſobedient *Iſrael*, both their own Sacred Hiſtory and other Writers have abundantly declared; and they are at this day ſcattered over the face of the whole Earth, to teſtify to all the World the accompliſhment of God's threatnings by the arms of their powerful Conquerors. And tho' other people have not been ſo ſignally diſperſed abroad, yet where is the Nation which God hath not overturned by the ſword, for ſuch grievous ſins as he hath threatned to viſit with this Judgment?

Thirdly, A third Judgment which waſtes and deſtroys a People, is Fire; *i. e.* the burning of towns and houſes, either with fire from Heaven, or with the Element ſo called of conſtant uſe amongſt us. And tho' I cannot ſay, that this is ſo expreſly and fully threatned as the Judgments before recited, yet by all wiſe and pious men it hath been reckoned in the number of God's Judgments. *A fire*, ſays *Eliphaz*, *ſhall conſume the Tabernacles of bribery*, Job xv. 34. *A fire not blown*, ſays *Zophar*, Job xx. 26. *ſhall conſume the wicked, and ſhall devour their ſubſtance. Upon ſuch*, ſays the *Pſalmiſt*, *God will rain fire and brimſtone, ſtorm and tempeſt*. Thus he rained upon *Sodom* and the neighbouring cities, by the teſtimony of undeniable Hiſtory; and he tells rebellious *Iſrael*, *I have overthrown ſome of you, as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah*, *i. e.* by fire, whether from Heaven or Earth, is not material for us to know; the deſtruction in effect being much the ſame, *Amos* iv. 10. And thus he threatens ſeveral Nations by

the ſame Prophet, Chap. i. 2. 'I will ſend a fire into 'the houſe of *Hazael*, which ſhall devour the palaces 'of *Benhadad*. I will ſend a fire upon the walls of 'Gaza, *Tyrus*, *Teman*, *Moab*, and *Judah*, which ſhall 'devour their palaces.' Briefly, it is a known method of God's Judgment, that he puniſheth by fire, inſomuch that he himſelf is ſtyled *a conſuming fire*.

Fourthly, UNSEASONABLE weather is one ſort of means which God uſes to lay waſte and deſtroy a Land: and that by the extremes either of heat or cold, rain or drought. For he aſſures us, that he commands the clouds, orders the winds, and opens or ſhuts the windows of Heaven, as he ſees fit: that he darkens the Sun and Moon, and reſtrains their influences from repleniſhing the Earth. That when he has given a plentiful crop, he ſometimes ſends an inundation of water to ſweep it all away, and thus doubles the affliction of an unworthy people, by firſt ſhowing them plenty, and bringing it almoſt into their Barns, and then ſnatching it from them, and leaving them to famiſh, and cauſing them to loſe both their ſeed and the product of it. This is evident in experience, that unſeaſonable weather impairs both the quantity and quality of the fruits of the Earth, and may be ſo exceſſive as utterly to deſtroy them, and lay a Country waſte and deſolate.

Fifthly, NOXIOUS creatures and vermin are capable of working the ſame effect. Thus God threatens diſobedient *Iſrael*, that all their trees and fruits ſhould be eaten by the Locuſts. And he ſtyles the Locuſts, the Canker-worm, the Caterpillar, and the Palmer-worm *his great Army*, which he ſends to devour an incorrigible People, *Joel* ii. 25. Such indeed they proved to *Pharaoh*, *Exod.* x. 15. for they covered the face

face of all his Land, and darkened the air, and did eat every herb of the field, and fruit of the trees, so that there remained not any green thing, either of tree or grass throughout all the Land of *Egypt*. As mischievous were they afterwards in *Palestine*, as we learn from the Prophet *Joel*, who complains that they had wasted the vines, and left no bark upon the fig-trees: that they had envenomed the seed so, that it rotted under the clod; and destroyed all the pastures, so that the beasts groaned, the herds of cattle were perplexed, and the flocks of sheep became desolate. God also tells his People by the Prophet *Amos*, Chap. iv. 9. 'I have smitten you with blasting and mildew; when 'your gardens, your vineyards, your fig-trees and 'olive-trees encreased, the palmer-worm devoured 'them: yet have ye not returned unto me.' The like account of these creatures we have from other Writers who have enquired into the nature of animals, and especially such as have been acquainted with Countries where these vermin have been apt to swarm.

BY all or any of these means, *viz.* pestilence, war, fire, unseasonable weather, and noxious creatures, does God lay waste a Country, and scatters the Inhabitants thereof.

AND the reasons of their dispersions and diminutions are evident. Pestilence and war are the immediate destroyers of life: and they likewise cut off the communications of traffick and merchandise, by which several Nations and Cities subsist: and must therefore of course sink, grow poor, and dispeopled, whenever such means of subsistence fail them. Hence it is, that *Isaiah*, in his twenty-third Chapter just before my Text calls upon the ships of *Tarshish*, *i. e.* the

ſea-faring Traders, to mourn for the miſerable ruin of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, two ſea-port Towns of the greateſt Traffick in *Syria*, whoſe Merchants were Princes, whoſe Factors were accounted among the honourable Men of the Earth, becauſe he foreſaw that their Trade ſhould be deſtroyed by the calamity of war, as it afterwards happened, there being now ſcarce any monument or remains left of them.

WAR and fire impoveriſh, and gradually diſ-people a Country, by demoliſhing their houſes, and conſuming their goods, furniture, and ſubſtance. Bad ſeaſons and devouring vermin work the ſame effect, by deſtroying thoſe fruits which are neceſſary to ſupport the life and ſtrength of man and beaſt. People muſt needs be diminiſhed and grow thin, when the neceſſaries of life, thro' want of product or ſome other event, become very dear to them; when Earth, the common parent and nurſe of mortal life, refuſes to yield her increaſe; or that increaſe when produced, is either ſnatched away again by ſome Judgment of God, or ſquandered and conſumed by the miſmanagement of men.

ALL theſe means of deſtruction, we ſay, are but rods in the hand of God. We ſee indeed other hands which manage them and lay them on; but they are all ſecondary and ſubordinate to the Divine Will. The Kings and Rulers of the Earth treat of war and peace, but the power of giving a full effect and iſſue to ſuch treaties is not in themſelves. 'Tis God who *reſtrains the Spirit of Princes*; 'tis he who has the faſhioning and forming the hearts of Kings, and turns their thoughts and reſolutions to the accompliſhing of his Decrees, while they think of nothing but doing their own will.— So peſtilential diſtempers may juſtly be

aſcribed

aſcribed to poiſonous vapours, which fuming out of the bowels of the Earth, impregnate the air with their ſickly matter: And this air being continually breathed by men, corrupts their blood and ſpirits, and deſtroys them. But it is God who unlocks the deep and ſecret receſſes of the Earth, where theſe vapours were confined, and commands them to aſcend into the air, and breed a fatal ſickneſs among men.

SO likewiſe when any of our habitations are reduced by the devouring flames to a heap of rubbiſh, we oftentimes hear that ſuch conflagrations were occaſioned by the negligence or malice of ſome people. Such people there are in the World, and certainly they deſerve the greateſt puniſhment. But it is thro' the juſt Judgment of God, that their negligence or malice hath ſuch a diſmal iſſue. He could have prevented it by the direction of his Providence, as we often ſee he doth in a wonderful manner. But when men have put themſelves out of God's Protection, and are given up to his Juſtice for the puniſhment of their ſins, their greateſt vigilance ſhall not be able to ſecure them. For *except the Lord keep the City, the watchman waketh but in vain.*

Laſtly, WHEN we labour under the calamity of a Famine, we preſently aſcribe it to unſeaſonable weather, to blaſting and mildew, to locuſts and vermin. Theſe are the neareſt and moſt viſible cauſes of it. But we are blind if we cannot ſee farther, to that ſupreme Lord who commands the winds and the clouds, and all the powers of Heaven and Earth. He hath given us Revelation and reaſon enough to diſcern his Providence at the bottom of theſe things; and there is no more than a common capacity requiſite to find it out.

AND

AND thus we have ſeen the meaning of *Iſaiah* in the words of my Text, *viz.* the nature of that calamity which he threatens ſhould come upon the Earth; together with the efficient cauſe or author of it, and the means whereby it is uſually effected. Let us now look a little farther, to diſcover the meritorious cauſe of this calamity. Which preſently occurs, ver. 5. *The Earth*, ſays he, *is defiled under the Inhabitants thereof: becauſe they have tranſgreſſed the Laws, changed the Ordinance, broken the everlaſting Covenant. Therefore hath the curſe devoured it, and they that dwell therein are deſolate, the Inhabitants are burned, and few men left.*

THIS is agreeable to that original Covenant which God made with the firſt man, which he eminently renewed with his People *Iſrael*, and which is to be underſtood as the rule of his dealing with all Nations of the Earth, *viz.* 'That he will cauſe the 'Earth to afford them the neceſſaries and comforts of 'life, ſo long as they ſerve him according to the 'meaſure of light and underſtanding which he hath 'given them.' *The Earth*, ſays the *Pſalmiſt*, *God hath given to the children of men:* but he hath ſo given it, as that we are ever his Tenants, and are bound to render him, our ſupreme Lord, certain homage and obedience for the enjoyment of this inheritance. The particulars of this obedience are well known to all of us who know God's word. And when we fail in the performance of any of them, our Lord does not preſently take the forfeiture, but hath graciouſly provided means, whereby we may make our peace with him. Which if we refuſe to do, if we go on to tranſgreſs, and proceed from leſs degrees of diſobedience to greater, till we grow to a contempt and defiance

defiance of our Lord, as it is uſual for ſuch offenders to do; then indeed he deprives us of his abuſed favours, withdraws his protection from us, and denies his bleſſing to the Earth and other Elements, that they become rather hurtful than profitable to us.

THE Earth, ſays our Prophet here, *is defiled under its Inhabitants*; meaning, that their ſins had polluted it, and brought a Curſe upon it. That which made their guilt in this reſpect the more inexcuſable, was a plain admonition which *Moſes* had given their forefathers to this purpoſe in the Wilderneſs, and which ſtood upon record for their inſtruction, *Lev.* xviii. where after he had declared ſeveral abominations which were practiſed in *Egypt* and *Canaan*, to be utterly unlawful for them, he adds, 'Defile not your 'ſelves in any of theſe things: for in all theſe the 'Nations are defiled which I caſt out before you, 'and the Land is defiled: Therefore I viſit their 'Iniquity upon it, and the Land it ſelf vomiteth out 'her Inhabitants. Ye ſhall therefore keep my Sta-'tutes and Judgments, and ſhall not commit any of 'theſe abominations which the People before you 'have committed, and defiled the Land with them. 'That the Land ſpew not you out alſo, when ye de-'file it, as it ſpewed out the Nations that were be-'fore you.

UPON the whole it appears, that abominable and provoking ſins are the cauſe which moves God to make any land empty and waſte, and to turn it upſide down, and to ſcatter abroad the Inhabitants thereof.

WHICH ſingle conſideration ſhould perſuade men, one would think, to fear God and obſerve his Covenant and Ordinances, even tho' they had nothing

to

to hope or fear after this life: ſince ſo much religion is abſolutely neceſſary for our temporal welfare. For if we believe either the ſacred Scriptures, or other Hiſtories of undoubted credit, we muſt believe that the incorrigible wickedneſs and corruption of Nations have finally ended in their utter diſſolution, and brought Prieſt and people, maſter and ſervant, maid and miſtreſs all upon a level; which is but a larger draught of that confuſion expreſſed in my Text, by *turning the Earth upſide down*. For where-ever there is any political Government, there muſt be diſtinctions of ſuperior and inferior orders of people; which run into anarchy and confuſion when Government is diſſolved.

THIS the nation here threatned, have found verified to their coſt: for together with their Country, they have loſt both their royal and prieſtly Government, and the honourable diſtinctions of their Tribes and Families.

LET us who ſerve the ſame God, take heed of provoking him by the like ſins, leſt we incur the like puniſhment which they ſuffer. But let us rather apply our hearts to the practice of thoſe duties of religion and virtue, which will prove the ſtability of all that is deſirable amongſt us, and conduce to our entire happineſs, having both the promiſe of this life preſent, and of that which is to come: through the merits, *&c.*

SERMON CVII.

On the Third Sunday *in* ADVENT.

MORNING.

ISAIAH xxv. 1.

O Lord thou art my God, I will exalt thee, I will praiſe thy Name; for thou haſt done wonderful Things; thy Counſels of old are Faithfulneſs and Truth.

IN the foregoing Chapter the Prophet recapitulates, and gives us a ſummary Account of the Judgments which he had been denouncing againſt the Land of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, and all the neighbouring Countries of *Egypt*, *Moab*, *Aſſyria* and *Babylon*: Now here, chap. xxv. xxvi. he celebrates the Faithfulneſs and Veracity of God, manifeſted in the Execution of his threatned Judgments, and praiſes him for diſſolving his ancient Church of degenerate *Jews*, in ſuch a manner as conduced to multiply the Number of the true *Iſraelites*, and bring in the Fulneſs of the *Gentiles*, whoſe Benefits in Chriſt he briefly ſurveys and commemorates.

And

And 1*ſt*, HE glorifies God for demonſtrating and ſealing the Truth of his ancient Revelations by viſible Facts, by the things which he had then done, and ſtill was about to do.

THY Counſels of old are Faithfulneſs and Truth. Theſe Counſels do in the general intimate that God will bleſs the Righteous, and fill the Wicked with Calamities, which are the Fruits of their own Ways; but in a more ſpecial manner they contain Admonitions to the People of *Iſrael*, to expect the flouriſhing State or Decay of their Nation and Cities, according to the meaſure of their Obedience or Contempt of the Law which God had given them. Theſe national Admonitions occur frequently in the Book of *Deuteronomy*, but moſt expreſly chap. xxviii. where, among many other things, they are threatned, in caſe of Diſobedience, with the Arms of a ſtrange and fierce Nation, who ſhould devour all their Goods, and beſiege them ſo ſtraitly, that Parents, for very hunger through the ſtraitneſs of the Siege, ſhould eat the Fleſh of their own Children.

NOW *Iſaiah* lived in that Age, when *Salmaneſer* King of *Aſſyria* diſſolved the Kingdom of *Iſrael*, demoliſhed their Metropolis *Samaria*, and carried away their Tribes into Captivity. To this Event we may juſtly preſume our Prophet had an Eye, when he ſays, *Thou haſt made of a City an Heap, of a defenced City a Ruin, a Palace of Strangers, to be no City, it ſhall never be built*; as indeed it never was with any thing of its ancient Strength and Splendor.

AND but little before *Iſaiah*'s time it was, that *Benhadad* the *Syrian* beſieged *Samaria*, ſo long and ſo cloſely, that he cauſed a dreadful Famine in it, ſuch as was never heard of before: and then it was that a Woman did

did dreſs and eat her own Child, as you read 2 *Kings* vi. and ſo literally fulfilled the threatening I juſt now mentioned from *Deut.* xxviii. which was in like manner fulfilled a ſecond time in the Siege of *Jeruſalem* by the *Romans*, as *Joſephus*, who was perſonally concerned in it, aſſures us.

AND though *Jeruſalem*, at the time of this Prophecy, was miraculouſly delivered from the Army of *Sennacherib*, when they were juſt ready to inveſt it, yet they deſtroyed many other Cities of *Judæa*, as our Prophet, who ſaw this Invaſion, and inſerted the Hiſtory of it in this very Book, has informed us. And therefore he had reaſon to obſerve, that God had fulfilled his Counſels of old, by laying more Cities than one in ruinous Heaps.

WE muſt likewiſe remember the Title of this Prophecy: it is *the Viſion of Iſaiah*, wherein, by the Illumination of the divine Spirit, he foreſaw many things, which did not come to paſs in his days. By virtue of this Light he foretold *Hezekiah*, that his Grand-ſons ſhould be Servants in the King of *Babylon*'s Court. By the ſame he ſaw them reſtored to their Country through the Favour of *Cyrus* the *Perſian*. By the ſame Light he ſaw the laſt Captivity of the *Jews*, and their Diſperſion in our and other Nations of the World, which endures to this day. And finally, in this Viſion he ſaw the coming of the Meſſiah, and the planting of the *Gentiles* in his Church, and the preſent and future Benefits of their calling, according to that antient Oracle of God, that *in him all the Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed.*

I confeſs there is a Title in the *Arabick* Verſion of this Prophet, placed like the Contents over our Chapters, which calls this and the two following Chapters,

King

King Hezekiah's Thankſgiving to God for the Victory which he had obtained, I ſuppoſe he means over *Sennacherib*, though that is not expreſt; and it cannot be denied but ſeveral Paſſages here would ſuit well with ſuch an occaſion: But becauſe there is no ſuch Title in the original *Hebrew*, nor in any other Verſion which I have ſeen, it muſt paſs either for an oral Tradition handed down to us by that Interpreter, or elſe for his own private Opinion; but I think the firſt is the more probable Conjecture.

THERE are moreover ſeveral Sayings of the Prophet here, which are Truths of an univerſal Latitude, and not reſtrained by any ſpecial Circumſtances of Time or Place.

FOR inſtance; God is always the *Strength* of his poor diſtreſſed Servants, their *Refuge* from a Storm, their *Shadow* from the Heat, *when the Blaſt of the terrible ones beats againſt them.* Not that he always vouchſafes them temporal Deliverances, but that he is always able to deliver them; and whenever they are delivered, it is by his Aſſiſtance. He can as eaſily bring down the Noiſe and abate the Inſolence of a Torrent of prevailing Enemies, as he can raiſe a Cloud to overſhadow and rain upon a Ground that is parched with the Heat of the Sun.

IT is likewiſe an univerſal Truth, that the Salvation of God is the beſt Fortification of a City, *and makes it more impregnable than Walls and Bulwarks.* That he is the proper Ground and Object of our Affiance throughout all Ages, becauſe *in him there is everlaſting Strength*, not liable like ours, to be any ways impaired or exhauſted.

THAT *he will keep them in perfect Peace, whoſe Minds are ſtaid on him.* That therefore it is our beſt

Policy

Policy to walk in the way of Uprightneſs, becauſe he is moſt upright, and weighs the Paths of the Juſt, and is ever mindful of thoſe, whoſe Soul hath a Deſire to his Name, and to the Remembrance of him.

IT is, *3dly*, too common a Practice for us *to give other Lords the Dominion over us*, to make Silver and Gold, Wood and Stone, the Work of Men's Hands, our Maſters; to put our truſt in Riches, or place our chief Dependance upon human Aids and Aſſiſtance; to follow the evil Faſhions and Cuſtoms of the World, or be more at the Command of ſinful Affections, than of the ſacred Laws and Counſels of God.

LASTLY, it is a general Corruption in People of all Ages, to abuſe both the Mercies and Judgments of God. They are very loth to ſee his Hand, when it is lifted up to chaſtiſe them; commonly imputing the Judgments which he ſends upon the Earth to meer Fortune and Chance. And if Trouble conſtrain them to pour out a Prayer, and to vow better Obedience for the time to come, yet they are commonly no longer pious, than while they are under the laſh; when Deliverance is vouchſafed them, their Righteouſneſs vaniſhes, they break Faith with God, and make no farther Application to his Majeſty.

THESE are the uſual Fruits of our corrupt Nature; and might very probably abound in *Jeruſalem* in the days of *Hezekiah* and *Iſaiah*. The Prayers of this righteous King, and holy Prophet, with the Piety of ſome few good People beſides, prevailed with God to deliver *Jeruſalem* at that time from the hand of the *Aſſyrians*.

THOUGH I muſt not forget to mention the Blaſphemies of the Enemy as one ground of this Diſpenſation; to which *Hezekiah* alludes, if this were his

Form of Thankſgiving, when he glorifies God, ver. 5. for *bringing down the Noiſe of Strangers*, meaning that Meſſage of Defiance which *Rabſhakeh* uttered againſt *Jeruſalem* in his Maſter's Name, and was anſwered by *Iſaiah* from the Mouth of God with a Sentence upon the proud *Aſſyrian*, which was immediately accompliſhed in his Deſtruction. But this ſurprizing Mercy did not reform the main Body of the *Jews*: their Corruptions quickly broke out again, and their Provocations grew as flagrant as ever, which finally diſſolved their Government, and carried them into Captivity.

HAVING thus briefly noted the general Sayings of the Prophet in this Chapter, I proceed now to conſider thoſe which I take to be limited to the Times of the Meſſiah.

I*ſt* THEN he ſays, *That in this Mountain, i. e.* in *Jeruſalem*, which was built upon Mount *Moriah*, *the Lord ſhall make unto all people a feaſt of fat things*. This Feaſt, ſays the *Chaldee* Paraphraſt, the People ſhall take to be for their Honour, but it ſhall turn to their Reproach; and ſubject them to ſuch diſaſters as they ſhall not eſcape, but periſh in them. If by the *People*, this Interpreter had meant his own People the *Jews*, he had come nearer the ſenſe of the Text; but he points his threatning at the *Gentiles*, commonly called *People* in the Sacred ſtyle, that they ſhall have no Joy of this Feaſt.

NOW this looks like a very ſtrained ſenſe, and contrary to this Prophet's real intention, who in his Viſion often foreſaw great bleſſings that ſhould accrue to the *Gentiles* by the coming of the *Meſſiah*. And it likewiſe croſſes the natural import of the words. For a Feaſt naturally affords joy and gladneſs to thoſe that

that partake of it; and this is deſcribed as conſiſting of the choiceſt Proviſions; and the Lord who makes it, hath ſo much ſincere goodneſs in his Invitation, as to gratifie and not abuſe the Gueſts whom he entertains at it. But how is it credible that all Nations of the Earth ſhould be feaſted at *Jeruſalem?* How can this conſiſt with any probability? This ſeems not poſſible to be reconciled any other way than in our Chriſtian ſenſe, that the words are to be ſpiritually underſtood of the Graces of God exhibited to mankind in Chriſt Jeſus. And they correſpond very well with that Parable *Matt.* xxii. where Chriſt himſelf compares *the Kingdom of Heaven, i. e.* the reign of the *Meſſiah, to a Feaſt which a King prepared for the Marriage of his Son.* To which when they who were firſt invited, meaning the *Jews*, refuſed to come, he ſent forth his Servants, his Miniſters, to bring in all ſorts of People, whoever they could find, to partake of this entertainment. There can be no queſtion but the moral of this ſimilitude is the heavenly food of the Soul, which is diſpenſed indifferently to all Nations by the preaching of the Goſpel, according to the unlimited Commiſſion which our Lord gave to his Apoſtles. And foraſmuch as this work was begun at *Sion*, and this worſhip at *Jeruſalem*, therefore all Nations are ſaid by the Prophet to be feaſted there, becauſe that is the place from whence they derive this Bread of Life.

THIS Interpretation clears up the ſenſe, and ſolves all the difficulties, not only of theſe, but the following words of the Prophet. *God will deſtroy in this Mountain the face of the covering caſt over all People, and the vail that is ſpread over all Nations.* What can this *vail* and this *covering* mean? A Chriſtian Inter-

preter eaſily reſolves us: That *Vail* of Separation which was drawn of old between *Jew* and *Gentile* by the Ceremonial Law: that *Covering* of Ignorance which was ſpread over the Nations, and kept them from the knowledge of the true God. Both theſe are taken away by the coming of Chriſt: with him no man is *common or unclean* upon the account of his Nation or Parentage, but he has enlarged the fold of his Church, ſo as to comprehend all people, *Jews* and *Gentiles* in one flock, and *having filled the Earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the Sea*, all People are or may be delivered from dumb Idols, and worſhip God in Spirit and in Truth. The beams of the Sun of Righteouſneſs are ſufficient to expell the darkneſs of Error and Superſtition.

THE Prophet proceeds to another benefit of this diſpenſation, that *Death ſhall be ſwallow'd up in Victory, and Tears wiped away from all Faces.* Which he repeats and confirms in the next Chapter, where he introduces the *Meſſiah* addreſſing his Church in theſe words: *Thy dead men ſhall live, together with my dead body ſhall they ariſe: Awake and ſing ye that dwell in duſt, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the Earth ſhall caſt out her dead.* The *Jews* themſelves apply this to the *Meſſiah* and his Kingdom, but they deceive themſelves in imagining that the accompliſhment of it was to be at his firſt coming. It was indeed then begun, by the raiſing of his own dead Body, and ſeveral others, out of the Grave; but it ſhall not be conſummated till the great Harveſt of the World at his ſecond appearing, *when all that are in the graves ſhall hear his voice, and ſhall come forth:* then, and not till then, ſhall be fulfilled the Propheſies here before us, *Death is ſwallowed up in victory, and Tears are wiped away*

away from all Faces. And in that day men ſhall ſay; Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will ſave us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his Salvation. This is the triumph of Chriſt's faithful Servants, who have conſtantly maintained his Honour and Worſhip in this preſent Life, againſt all the oppoſition of wicked men and Devils; when they ſhall ſee him coming in the Clouds with Power and great Glory, to receive them to himſelf, it will tranſport them, as it juſtly may, with an ecſtaſie of gladneſs, and they ſhall cry out before all the gazing Spectators, *This is our God, whom we have depended upon for the Salvation which he promiſed us.*

AND *he ſhall ſpread forth his Hands in the midſt of them, as he that ſwimmeth ſpreadeth forth his Hands to ſwim.* This is a lively reſemblance of Chriſt ſtretcht out upon the Croſs; the figure which a man ſtrikes with his hands in ſwimming repreſents the poſture of Crucifixion very exactly. Now it has been the opinion of ſome holy men of old, that our Lord will uſher in his ſecond appearing with the ſign of the Croſs, both for the Confuſion of his Enemies, whoſe *Pride he will humble very low, and bring to the ground, even to the duſt*, as our Prophet here ſpeaks; and for the Conſolation of all his Servants, who have not been aſhamed of the Croſs of Chriſt. This is an ancient Opinion; and truly it is well countenanced by this paſſage of *Iſaiah*. And there is a very fitting congruity in it, *viz.* to ſhow, that the Victory which our Lord obtained over Death and the Grave, and all the Powers of Darkneſs, was begun and ended by his ſufferings on the Croſs.

AND thus by the help of the Prophet's *Viſion* in this chapter, we have had a glimpſe of the Bleſſings convey'd to us by the coming of Jeſus Chriſt, ſo far as his Words have given us occaſion to conſider them.

AND the conſideration of them ſhould excite us to emulate our Prophet in the words of my Text, to eſteem them as wonderful things, and to praiſe and magnifie God for them.

IN this Relation which our Lord hath contracted with us, he hath exceedingly honoured us, and became the ſon of Man, that we might be made the ſons of God. He hath ſtript us of the poor weeds of our ſinful Mortality, and cloathed us with the Robes of his own Righteouſneſs. He is our Reſurrection and our Life.

THIS miniſters ſtrong conſolation to the Chriſtian of hard fortune and circumſtances in this World, *when the blaſt of the Mighty beats like a Storm upon him* in haughty diſdain and contempt of him for his Indigence. He can comfort himſelf, if he be a ſervant of Chriſt, that his Lord became poor to make him rich, and that he hath as good a Title as the greateſt man upon Earth, to an Inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven, which far exceeds all the Splendor and Felicity which this World can afford.

LET us praiſe God for feeding us with the pleaſures of his Houſe, even of his holy Temple, where we may buy Wine and Milk without Money and without Price; I mean thoſe holy Ordinances, Sacraments, Prayers, and Praiſes, which fill the Souls of the Righteous as it were with marrow and

and fatneſs. For they that hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs, ſhall be ſo filled. Man ſhall not live by bread alone; he who can reliſh nothing but what ſprings out of the Earth, deſerves not the name of a Man, but is of a Conſtitution wholly like the Beaſt which periſheth. He that is of the Earth, is earthy; but he that ſpiritually eateth the fleſh of the Son of Man, and drinketh his blood, is nouriſhed to eternal Life, and ſhall be raiſed to a happy Immortality at the laſt day.

BLESSED be our Lord, who hath taken away the Vail of our Ignorance, and turned us from dumb Idols to ſerve the living God, whom the World with all their wiſdom never knew; and therefore Jeſus Chriſt is juſtly ſtyled the Wiſdom of the Father, becauſe he alone has made him known to the World, and compoſed ſuch a Syſtem of ſound Religion, holineſs and pureneſs of living, as upbraids all the ſects of Philoſophers with Ignorance and Error. This the wiſeſt of them were aware of, as ſoon as the Goſpel began to be preached, and left their beggarly Elements for the profeſſion of it, and with St. *Paul* they counted all their former ſtudies and attainments but time loſt and thrown away, in compariſon of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.

AND bleſſed be his holy Name, that he will one day ſwallow up Death in victory, and wipe away the tears from the faces of all his Servants, and take away their reproach from the Earth. It is a handle to the wicked to reproach the Servants of God, that they live under the dominion of Death. *Job's* Wife reviled him with his ſervice, becauſe being eminently religious, he ſuffered great Calamities. The

Jews inſulted our Lord himſelf, when he hung upon the Croſs, as forſaken of God. *Let God deliver him*, ſaid they, *if he owns him for his Son; let him come down from the Croſs, and we will believe in him.* Thus ſanguinary Perſecutors have commonly reproached holy Martyrs under their Sufferings, that their Cauſe was bad, becauſe their Maſter did not interpoſe for their Deliverance.

NOW this Reproach is in ſome meaſure taken away already by the Reſurrection of our Lord: but it cannot be wholly confuted and ſilenced, till the Reſurrection of all his Saints. Death indeed has already received ſome wounds by a few Reſurrections that are paſt; but then it will be wholly ſwallowed up in Victory. It exerciſes its Tyranny at preſent, in manifold Calamities of our outward Eſtate, in various diſeaſes of the Body, and anxieties of Mind, which humble the ſtouteſt men alive, and draw tears and groans from the moſt refined Saints upon Earth.

BUT the time is coming when there ſhall be a death of this Death, an end of this King of Terrors dominion over the Saints of God; whom he ſhall not be able to approach or touch with the leaſt pain or grief imaginable. He ſhall be ſhut up in the bottomleſs Pit with the reprobate Spirits, while the Righteous ſhall ſhine in the immortal Kingdom of their Heavenly Lord, where all Tears ſhall be wiped away from their Eyes, and there ſhall be no curſe, no darkneſs, no anguiſh nor pain; even the remembrance and ideas of theſe things ſhall be quite obliterated.

BLESSED be God for providing ſuch a happy ſtate for us. Every pain and grief which we feel,

feel, ought to recommend the Mercy of this gracious Proviſion; and our apprehenſions of it now by Faith, ſhould much alleviate the ſufferings of this preſent Life, *and make our Yoke eaſie and our Burden light*, in a near view of the perfect fruition and poſſeſſion which we ſhall certainly have of it, through the Merits and Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. To whom, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON CVIII.

On the Third Sunday *in* ADVENT.

EVENING.

ISAIAH xxvi. 1, 2.

In that day ſhall this ſong be ſung in the land of Judah: We have a ſtrong city; ſalvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth, may enter in.

FOR the right underſtanding of which words, it may be proper to obſerve, that *Iſaiah* in the foregoing Chapters had been repreſenting all *Paleſtine* and the Kingdoms round about it, as a ſcene of deſolation. *Iſrael* was going into captivity, and *Judah* was ripening apace for the ſame fate. Nor were their conquerors and other enemies who rejoyced at their fall, long to enjoy the pleaſure of their triumphs. A heavy burden is laid upon *Moab*, and *Tyre*, and *Babylon*; a burden which would preſs them down ſo as never to riſe again. But of *Jacob* he ſays, xvii. 4. *Tho' his glory ſhall be made thin, and the fatneſs of his fleſh ſhall*

ſhall wax lean: yet a gleaning ſhall be left of him, as the berries which remain after the ſhaking of an olive-yard, two or three in the top of the uppermoſt bough; four or five in the outmoſt branches. This is ſpoken of *Iſrael:* and the like compariſon is uſed of *Judah*, xxiv. 13. to which is added, *They ſhall lift up their voice, they ſhall ſing for the Majeſty of the Lord, i. e.* in the day of their redemption, when God ſhall recall them from the Countries where he had ſcattered them. This the Prophet declares more clearly and fully in other places of his Book. Particularly Chap. i. 25. 'I will turn 'my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy 'droſs, and take away all thy tinn: and I will reſtore 'thy Judges as at the firſt, and thy Counſellors as at 'the beginning: afterward thou ſhalt be called, the 'city of righteouſneſs, the faithful city. *Sion* ſhall 'be redeemed with judgment, and her Converts with 'righteouſneſs. And Chap. iv. In that day, he that 'is left in *Sion*, and he that remaineth in *Jeruſalem*, 'ſhall be called Holy; when the Lord ſhall have 'waſhed away the filth of the Daughters of *Sion*, and 'ſhall have purged the blood of *Jeruſalem* from the 'midſt thereof, by the Spirit of Judgment, and by 'the Spirit of burning. And it ſhall be ſaid in that 'day, Ch. xxv. Loe, this is our God, we have waited 'for him, and he will ſave us: this is the Lord, we 'have waited for him; we will be glad, and rejoyce 'in his Salvation. For in this mountain ſhall the hand 'of the Lord reſt.' And here in my Text he ſays, *In that day they ſhall ſing this ſong in the land of Judah: We have a ſtrong city*, &c.

NOW if it be demanded, what period of time, what day is this which the Prophet ſpeaks of? We muſt anſwer, that it is the time when the people, who for their

their provocations were thrown into the furnace of affliction, and had continued in it till they were purged from their ſins; were delivered from it, and reſtored to the favour of God, and the enjoyment of his former mercies. Of which reſtoration there are three kinds or degrees, plainly ſpoken of by the Prophet *Iſaiah*. *Firſt*, The *Jews* return from the land of their captivity, eſpecially that of *Babylon*. *Secondly*, The reſtoration of the Family and Kingdom of *David* in the perſon of the *Meſſiah*. And *Thirdly*, The perfect felicity of that Kingdom in a ſtate of future glory.

AND *Firſt*, *Iſaiah*, who foretold that his People ſhould be captives in *Babylon*, ſpeaks as expreſly of their return from thence, Chap. xiv. '.For the Lord 'will have mercy on *Jacob*, and will yet chuſe *Iſrael*, 'and ſet them in their own land:—— and they ſhall 'take them captives, whoſe captives they were, and 'they ſhall rule over their oppreſſors. And it ſhall 'come to paſs, in the day that the Lord ſhall give 'thee reſt from thy ſorrow, and from thy fear, and 'from the hard bondage wherein thou waſt made to 'ſerve, that thou ſhalt take up this Proverb againſt 'the King of *Babylon*, and ſay, How hath the oppreſſor ceaſed? the golden city ceaſed?' This was fulfilled in the memory of many of thoſe who were carried away captives to *Babylon*. And of this event we muſt underſtand the words of my Text, if we take them in the moſt obvious and literal meaning. For many Songs did they ſing in the land of *Judah* upon that occaſion, as we find them in the Book of *Pſalms*: and moſt properly might they ſing this of the Prophet here before us. They had the greateſt reaſon to call the ſalvation and bleſſing of God, *the walls and bulwarks* of their reviving *Jeruſalem*. For without the

ſpecial

ſpecial aid of God, how had they been able with their own few hands to fortify themſelves in their ruinous city, and to carry on the repairs of it, againſt the united forces of *Sanballat* and his army of *Samaritans*, *Tobiah* and his *Ammonites*, together with the *Arabians* and *Aſhdodites*, who all conſpired to come and fight againſt *Jeruſalem*, and hinder the rebuilding of it, as we read *Nehem.* iv. But *Iſaïah* had furniſhed them before-hand with the arguments of this Chapter, whereby they might be incited to wait upon God in the way of his Judgments, to turn the whole deſire of their ſouls to the invocation of his name, and the remembrance of his former acts; to be ſenſible that he ordained them peace, and wrought all their works for them: to praiſe him for delivering them from thoſe other Lords which once had the dominion over them, and henceforth to make mention of his name only; to truſt in him for ever, as their everlaſting ſtrength, and to believe that he would keep them in perfect peace, ſo long as their minds were ſtayed on him.

THEY had ſeen how the hand of God had brought down thoſe that dwelt on high, how low he had laid the lofty city of *Babylon* by the arms of *Cyrus*, ſo low that even the feet of the poor and the ſteps of the needy trampled upon its high places. They ſaw that their formidable Maſters were dead; *i. e.* either deceaſed and gone out of the World, or dead in their politick capacity, ſo reduced and enfeebled by an adverſe power, as not to be able to hold them any longer in ſubjection. Hence they were encouraged to hope, that their God who had thrown down their adverſary *Babylon*, would again exalt his own *Jeruſalem*; and having ſlain their enemies, would raiſe them as it were from the dead, out of the duſt of the earth, to

be

be called again by his name, and to glorify him in his Holy Temple.

SUCH were the arguments of ſucceſs which the *Jews* at their reſtoration from their captivity, might raiſe to themſelves out of this Chapter: which *Iſaiah* ſeems to have compoſed with a three-fold view, as a prediction of the event, as a *Pſalm* of praiſe to God for the deliverance, and as a joyful triumph over their Enemies. To this Reſtoration the words of my Text may be thought moſt applicable at firſt view, and in their literal Senſe. For in thoſe days, and upon that occaſion, this Song was very proper to be ſung in the land of *Judah*.

But *Secondly*, THERE is another Reſtoration which is often pointed out and promiſed by our Prophet, and that is, the Reſtoration of the Family and Kingdom of *David* in the perſon of the *Meſſiah*. Of this, the deliverances from *Egypt*, *Babylon*, and other enemies of *Iſrael*, were Types; and they were vouchſafed by the Divine Providence for this very end, that the *Meſſiah* might be born King of the *Jews*, in the Church and Nation of that People, while they ſubſiſted as ſuch in the World. For this purpoſe our Prophet, Chap. vii. promiſes him as a pledge and aſſurance to the houſe of *Ahaz*, that *Rezin* King of *Syria*, and *Pekah* King of *Iſrael* ſhould not put an end to their Family and Nation in the invaſion which they made upon *Judah*: 'For, ſays he, before the Houſe 'and Tribe of *David* is extinct, a Virgin of your Fa-'mily muſt conceive and bear a Son, whoſe name 'ſhall be called *Immanuel*,' otherwiſe the *Meſſiah*. In the ninth Chapter he is promiſed again. In the eleventh he is characterized as uniting *Jews* and *Gentiles* in one body. *There ſhall come forth a Rod out of the Stem*

Stem of Jeſſe, and a branch ſhall grow out of his roots. Where the *Chaldee* Paraphraſe runs thus: *A King ſhall come of the ſons of Jeſſe, and the Meſſiah of his ſons ſons.* *Iſaiah* proceeds; 'He ſhall ſtand for an Enſign of the 'People; to him ſhall the *Gentiles* ſeek, and his reſt 'ſhall be glorious. And it ſhall come to paſs in that 'day (in the reign of the *Meſſiah*) the Lord ſhall ſet 'his hand again the ſecond time to recover the rem-'nant of his People which ſhall be left, from *Aſſyria*, 'and from *Egypt*, and from *Pathros*, and from *Cuſh*, 'and from *Elam*, and from *Shinar*, and from *Hamath*, 'and from the Iſlands of the ſea. And he ſhall ſet 'up an Enſign for the Nations, and ſhall aſſemble 'the outcaſts of *Iſrael*, and gather together the diſ-'perſed of *Judah* from the four corners of the 'earth.'

IT were eaſy to multiply proofs of this kind, but not neceſſary, ſince the *Jews* agree with us, that *Iſaiah* abounds in Prophecies of the *Meſſiah*. In this we differ, that we apply them to our Lord *Jeſus*, whom they reject. I ſhall not digreſs ſo far, as to enter into that controverſy at preſent, but take it for granted that we are right: and then conſider with what propriety *Iſaiah*'s Song here before us, may be adapted to the times of *Chriſt* and his Church.

IN that day, i. e. in the reign of the *Meſſiah, ſhall this Song be ſung in the land of Judah.* Here Interpreters would have us to take *Judah* in a ſpiritual ſenſe, for the whole ſtate of Chriſtendom. And it is a warrantable interpretation; for ſo *Sion* and *Jeruſalem* are often uſed to denote, by ſimilitude, the Chriſtian Church. And this Song is very pertinently taken into the devotions of all good Chriſtians, both in our Churches and private houſes. However, if we will

ſeek

ſeek for a literal accompliſhment of this Prophecy by Chriſtians in the land of *Judah*, we need not fear being diſappointed. For I doubt not but Hiſtory would make it appear, that from the firſt preaching of the Goſpel to this day, there have been Chriſtians in *Judah* and *Jeruſalem* who have *ſung this Song*, *i. e.* glorified God in the uſe of this as well as other parts of Holy Scripture. And they might pronounce every verſe of it as rationally and heartily as any former generations of the ſervants of God.

IF the ſtrength of a city conſiſts in the multitude of citizens, who live in ſincere love and unanimity one towards another, Chriſtians might well ſay in their very foundation at *Jeruſalem*, *we have a ſtrong city:* for we hear St. *James* the Apoſtle and firſt Biſhop of *Jeruſalem* telling St. *Paul*, *Acts* xxi. 20. that *there were many thouſands* (it ſhould be *myriads*, many *ten thouſands)* of *Jews* who believed in *Jeſus*. Many myriads could hardly amount to leſs than forty or fifty thouſand of ſuch converts. And the vigilant and gracious eye of God over them, was a greater ſecurity to them than walls and bulwarks. For when *Jeruſalem* was to be deſtroyed by the *Romans*, a little before the deſtruction, by a ſpecial hand of Divine Providence the Chriſtians were led out of the city, to a place called *Pella* beyond *Jordan*, and there remained in ſafety, as *Euſebius* writes, *Eccleſ. Hiſt. B.* iii. *c.* 5. *Epiphanius* ſays that they were warned by an Angel from God to do this; and that ſeveral years after, when the *Roman* Emperor *Hadrian* had repaired *Jeruſalem*, they returned thither again. Then were *the gates of that city opened*, according to the words of my Text, *that the righteous nation which kept the truth, might enter in.*

AND

AND ſince the coming of our bleſſed Lord, how eminently hath been fulfilled that ſaying of the Prophet to God, ver. 9. of this Song, *When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteouſneſs?* For whether by *Judgments* we underſtand the Laws, Ordinances, and Works of God, contained in the ſacred Books, as that word often imports, we can truly ſay with the Apoſtle, *Their ſound is* long ſince *gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world:* or whether we take *Judgments* in the common ſenſe, for the diſpenſations of God's Providence in the government of the World, how plainly hath his arm been manifeſted under the reign of the *Meſſiah*, in vindicating his own Cauſe, and puniſhing his enemies? So that they who obſtinately ſhut their eyes, and would not ſee his hand when it was lifted up, have at laſt been forced to acknowledge it, and take ſhame to themſelves for their envy at his People. 'Tis true indeed, ſome have remained hardened Infidels under the fulleſt manifeſtations of God's Mercies and Judgments, according to that which our Prophet foreſaw in his Viſion: *Let favour be ſhewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteouſneſs; in the land of uprightneſs will he deal unjuſtly, and will not behold the Majeſty of the Lord.* But notwithſtanding this, ſince the Revelation of God by *Jeſus Chriſt*, infinite numbers of mankind have learned that piety, holineſs, and goodneſs in all manner of converſation, which was far from being known or practiſed in the World before his days. And the fatherly goodneſs, the gracious reconciliation, the loving-kindneſs of the Lord towards the children of men, hath been abundantly teſtified to them, who before were accounted as aliens and enemies.

NOR muſt we conclude, when we hear the *Jews* infidelity complained of, that they were all Infidels, and Enemies to the Goſpel of *Chriſt*. For we learn from that very Goſpel, that *Jews* were the firſt Writers and Preachers of it, and Sufferers for it. We are taught by them how to interpret many ancient Prophecies relating to the *Meſſiah*. We have heard from the firſt acts of Chriſtianity, that many myriads of them embraced it in its moſt tender Infancy. They were the chief propagators of it throughout the World, and the great inſtruments of gathering the *Gentiles* and the Diſperſed of *Iſrael* into one Church under the banner of *Jeſus Chriſt*, as *Iſaiah* had propheſied.

WE are too ſenſible of the preſent hardneſs of that People, to diſſemble it, and are ſorry to find that many Chriſtians in name, are no better in reality. But we do not pretend that the Kingdom of our Lord is yet compleat. We daily pray for the farther perfection and glory of it, in the reſtoration of the Church from all the powers of darkneſs, and tyranny of ſin and death, which was the *third* thing we propoſed to conſider.

THIS reſtoration of the Church under the reign of the *Meſſiah*, is much ſpoken of by our Prophet *Iſaiah*: particularly xi. 9. he tells us, 'That the time 'was coming, when nothing ſhould be left that could 'hurt or deſtroy in all God's holy Mountain,' alluding to mount *Sion*, which is a type of the whole Church of *Chriſt*. 'That in this Mountain, Chap. 'xxv. God ſhall deſtroy the face of the covering caſt 'over all people, and the vail ſpread over all nations: 'that he will ſwallow up death in victory, and wipe 'away tears from off all faces. That his dead ſervants,

'vants, Chap. xxvi. ſhall riſe again out of their graves, 'and live together with him. Therefore he calls up-'on them with a cheerful and pleaſant voice, ſaying, 'Awake and ſing, ye that dwell in the duſt: for thy 'dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth ſhall caſt 'out her dead. For the people ſhall dwell in *Sion* at '*Jeruſalem:* thou ſhalt weep no more: he will be 'very gracious unto thee, at the voice of thy cry; 'when he ſhall hear it, he will anſwer thee. And 'there ſhall be upon every high mountain, and upon 'every high hill, rivers and ſtreams of waters. The 'light of the Moon alſo ſhall be as the light of the 'Sun: and the light of the Sun ſhall be ſevenfold, as 'the light of ſeven days, in the day that the Lord 'bindeth up the breach of his People, and healeth the 'ſtroke of their wound.'

THESE promiſes contain the moſt tranſcendent joys and felicities to be ſhowred down upon the Kingdom of the *Meſſiah*, ſuch as we have never yet known, or read of in any Hiſtory. I paſs over many Texts of like importance, and come to Chap. lx. which begins thus; *Ariſe, ſhine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is riſen upon thee.* From whence to the end of the Prophecy we have a deſcription of ſuch a *Sion* and *Jeruſalem*, as might rival Heaven in brightneſs, ſecurity, and fulneſs of joy. 'Whereas 'thou haſt been forſaken and hated, ſo that no man 'went thro' thee, I will make thee an eternal excel-'lency, a joy of many generations. Thou ſhalt ſuck 'the milk of the *Gentiles*, and the breaſts of Kings. 'Violence ſhall no more be heard in thy land, waſt-'ing nor deſtruction within thy borders; but thou 'ſhalt call thy walls ſalvation, and thy gates praiſe.

'The Sun ſhall no more be thy light by day, nor 'the Moon by night: but the Lord ſhall be unto thee 'an everlaſting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy 'people ſhall be all righteous; they ſhall inherit the 'land for ever. A little one ſhall become a thouſand, 'and a ſmall one a ſtrong nation.— I have ſet watch-'men upon thy walls, O *Jeruſalem*, which ſhall never 'hold their peace day nor night. I have proclaimed 'unto the end of the World, Say ye to the Daughter 'of *Sion*, Behold, thy ſalvation cometh; behold, his 'reward is with him, and his work before him. I 'create new Heavens and a new Earth: and the for-'mer ſhall not be remembred, nor come into mind. 'I create *Jeruſalem* a rejoycing, and her people a 'joy. I will extend peace to her, like a river, 'and the glory of the *Gentiles* like a flowing 'ſtream.'

THUS far the Prophet *Iſaiah* concerning the renovation and perfection of things in the Kingdom of the *Meſſiah:* To which correſpond ſeveral expreſſions in the twenty-firſt and twenty-ſecond Chapters of St. *John*'s *Revelation*, where he affirms, that he ſaw a new Heaven and new Earth: and the Holy City, new *Jeruſalem*, coming down from God, prepared as a Bride adorned for her Husband. And that he heard a voice out of Heaven, ſaying, *Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they ſhall be his people, and God himſelf ſhall be with them, and be their God.*

THESE Scriptures have induced ſeveral of the primitive Fathers of our Church to believe, that the City of *Jeruſalem* and the Temple there ſhall be rebuilt, and that the land of *Judæa* ſhall be the habi-

tation

tation of ſuch *Jews* and *Gentiles* as ſhall conſtitute the Kingdom of the *Meſſiah* in the height of its glory. I will recite a few paſſages to this purpoſe out of ſome of their Books.

TRYPHO the *Jew*, in his Dialogue with *Juſtin Martyr*, asks, 'Do you Chriſtians ſay, that *Jeruſalem* 'ſhall be built again, and that your people ſhall be 'gathered together there, and rejoice with *Chriſt*, to-'gether with the Patriarchs, Prophets, and thoſe of 'our nation, or others made Proſelytes before the 'coming of your *Chriſt* to Judgment; and that none 'of us Unbelievers ſhall have any Inheritance in the 'Holy Mount of God?' *Juſtin* affirms to him, 'That 'believing *Gentiles* ſhall then dwell in the Holy Mount, 'and that *Jews* ſhall acknowledge *Jeſus* in the ſame 'place of *Jeruſalem* where they had crucified him. 'For, ſays he, the Saints ſhall reign in *Jeruſalem* 'rebuilt, adorned, and augmented; and this all or-'thodox Chriſtians acknowledge: who therefore ex-'pect that *Chriſt* at his ſecond coming will appear in '*Jeruſalem*.' So ſays *Irenæus*; 'In the days of the '*Meſſiah*, *Jeruſalem* ſhall be rebuilt, and the *Jews* 'ſhall be reſtored to the land which God gave to their 'Fathers.' '*Chriſt*, ſays *Lactantius*, ſhall build the 'Holy City, and there ſhall be the reign of the Juſt.' St *Barnabas* is poſitive, 'That the very Temple which 'was deſtroyed by their enemies, ſhall be glorioufly 'rebuilt by their ſervants.'

THESE paſſages I have recited, not with any deſign to diſcuſs exactly the doctrine of them, but only to ſhew the ſenſe of Prophets, Apoſtles, and Fathers of the Church, that there will be a more perfect and glorious ſtate of the Kingdom of *Chriſt*, than any

that hath ever yet appeared in the World. Which is the ſubſtance of my third aſſertion. Tho' I hardly think this to be the day ſpoken of in my Text; becauſe I preſume this State ſhall be ſo perfect, that none who is admitted into it, will be guilty of what follows here, *viz.* the abuſe of the favour of God, and *dealing unjuſtly in this land of uprightneſs.*

I ſhall only add, by way of application, that the righteouſneſs which is neceſſary to fit us for this State, will bring our preſent cities to the neareſt reſemblance of it. For Heaven it ſelf could not be happy without it, and the Felicities of this world always hold a proportion to it. The more righteous any city or nation is, ſo much the nearer it approaches to Heaven, and hath the ſtronger title to the favour and protection of God. *O my people*, ſays the Prophet *Micah*, *remember now what Balak King of Moab conſulted, and what Balaam the ſon of Beor anſwered him, that ye may know the righteouſneſs of the Lord.* The conſult was, how to bring a Curſe upon *Iſrael.* 'There's no ſuch 'thing can be done, ſays the Magician, except you 'firſt ſeduce them from their allegiance to their God.' The King followed this advice, and ſo prevailed againſt them. For as ſoon as they were debauched, they became accurſed. In both diſpenſations was ſeen *the righteouſneſs of the Lord:* for he had covenanted to preſerve them while obedient, and to puniſh them when they rebelled againſt him. And according to this method he always treated them. Their temporal *Jeruſalem* was made a type of the ſpiritual, an embleme of Heaven, from its firſt character, becauſe it was once a holy and faithful city. As ſuch it ſtood impregnable; God's Salvation was its walls and bulwarks.

warks. *Pekah* and *Remaliah* and *Sennacherib*, mentioned by our Prophet, attempted it in vain. *But how*, ſays *Iſaiah*, *is the faithful city become an harlot? It was full of judgment, righteouſneſs lodged in it, but now murderers and workers of all iniquity. Therefore ſaid the Lord of hoſts, the mighty one of Iſrael; Ah, I will eaſe me of mine adverſaries, and avenge me of mine enemies. And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy droſs, and take away all thy tin.* This purging was effected by the fire of the *Chaldeans*, which conſumed their houſes and laid them in rubbiſh. Afterwards they were reſtored, and became again the *city of righteouſneſs, the faithful city*; till loſing this character a ſecond time, they loſt their City and Country to the *Romans*, which to this day they have not been able to recover again. Such a change of their fortune was made by the change of their manners.

WOULD we be able to ſing this Song in our Land, That we have ſtrong cities? we muſt be qualified to go thro' the other parts of it, and to profeſs that God is our ſtrength, and that his bleſſing is our ſureſt defence. We muſt not endure other Lords, who would pervert us from his fear, to have the dominion over us: we muſt not be ſo favourable to the wicked, as to encourage them in their impieties, and ſo partake with them in diſhonouring and affronting the Divine Majeſty: But we muſt wait upon God and ſerve him in that way of worſhip which he hath revealed to us. We muſt acknowledge that when he lifts up his hand, he eaſily brings down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he lays it low, even to the ground, he brings it even to the duſt. Let

the deſire of our Soul be to his Name; let us love him with all our heart, and ſeek his Kingdom and Righteouſneſs above all things. Then may we put our whole truſt in him, and caſt our cares entirely upon him. Then will he ordain peace for us, and bring all our affairs to a good iſſue, thro' him whom he hath inveſted with all power in Heaven and Earth, the Prince of Peace, the Redeemer and Saviour of our Souls and Bodies, *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, To whom, *&c.*

SERMON CIX.

On the Fourth Sunday *in* ADVENT.

MORNING.

ISAIAH xxx. 7.

For the Egyptians ſhall help in vain, and to no purpoſe: Therefore have I cryed concerning this; their ſtrength is to ſit ſtill.

IN the Hiſtory of the Kings of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, we read, that upon ſeveral occaſions, when they were diſtreſt by the *Aſſyrians* and other invading Enemies, they fortified themſelves againſt them by making an Alliance with the *Egyptians*. Particularly we are told that two ſuch Alliances happened in the time of the Prophet *Iſaiah*. The firſt was between *Hoſhea* King of *Iſrael*, and *So*, otherwiſe called *Sabacon* King of *Egypt*; the *Iſraelite* hoping by the aſſiſtance of this *Egyptian* to ſhake off the Yoke of the *Aſſyrian*; in confidence hereof he withdrew his ſubjection from *Salmaneſer* King of *Aſſyria*, and would pay him no more Tribute, as he had formerly done. Whereupon the *Aſſyrian* marched with an Army againſt

gainſt *Hoſhea*, and having ſubdued all the Country round about, pent him up in *Samaria*, and there beſieged him three Years; at the end of which he took the City, put *Hoſhea* in Chains, and carried the People into Captivity.

THE ſecond Alliance was between *Hezekiah* King of *Judah*, and *Sevechus*, Son of the ſaid *Sabacon*, King of *Egypt*, upon occaſion of *Sennacherib*'s Invaſion of *Judæa*. *Sevechus* for his own part was no military Man; but he engaged his Kinſman and Neighbour, *Tirhakah* King of *Ethiopia*, to lead the Army, conſiſting of part *Ethiopians*, and part *Egyptians*, againſt *Sennacherib*; of him we read 2 *Kings* xix. But *Iſaiah* had propheſied before, chap. xx. *that Egypt and Ethiopia ſhould be puniſhed by the Aſſyrians*, and accordingly they were overthrown in this Battle.

NOW the advantages which the *Jews* promiſed themſelves from their Alliance with *Egypt*, were theſe. The *Egyptians* abounded in Chariots and Horſes, which the *Jews* were deſtitute of. For *Paleſtine* being a Country full of ſteep Hills, and narrow difficult Ways, was in many places unpaſſable by Horſes, and therefore their Beaſts of burden were Camels, Aſſes and Mules, which are not apt to ſtart, but tread ſure in ſide-long dangerous ways. Theſe ſerved them very commodiouſly in times of Peace. But when they were invaded by Armies of the *Aſſyrians* and *Chaldeans*, who had Troops of Horſe, and multitudes of Chariots, they wanted the like Forces to oppoſe them; and ſuch the *Egyptians* could very well ſupply them with.

BESIDES, the *Aſſyrians* and *Chaldeans* were at that time the moſt formidable Powers of the Eaſt, ambitious of univerſal Monarchy, and threatening to

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ſubdue *Egypt* as well as other rich Kingdoms. On which account the *Egyptians* were jealous of them, and therefore were more eaſily prevailed upon, and more cheaply engaged to aſſiſt the *Jews*, or any other People in their Wars againſt them.

BUT theſe Alliances were diſpleaſing to God, as he declares by the Prophet in my Text, and at the beginning of this Chapter. *Wo*, ſays he, *to the rebellious Children, which go down into Egypt without conſulting me, to ſtrengthen themſelves in the ſtrength of Pharaoh, and to truſt in the ſhadow of Egypt. Therefore the ſtrength of Pharaoh ſhall be your ſhame, and your truſt in the ſhadow of Egypt, your confuſion.* As indeed it proved in the caſe of *Hoſhea*, who was brought to ruin by his dependence on them; and how unſerviceable they were in their Alliance with *Judah* againſt *Sennacherib*, we have ſeen before.

THE reaſons why God prohibited his People to confederate with the *Egyptians*, are theſe that follow.

1*ſt*, BECAUSE he had delivered their Forefathers out of the Land of *Egypt* with a mighty Hand, ſtretched out from Heaven, and unaſſiſted by any human Means. He had manifeſted himſelf to be far above all their Gods, in that he triumphed over them in the ten Plagues, and drowned their King and Army in the Red Sea. Notwithſtanding all which ſufficient Convictions, the *Egyptians* ſtill perſiſted in their groſs Idolatry; which might juſtly provoke God to forbid his People any commerce or dealing with them.

2. THEIR applying to *Egypt* for aid againſt their Enemies, was derogatory to the honour of God, who having anciently demonſtrated his ability to ſave his

People,

People, and having promiſed ſtill to vouchſafe them his Protection in proportion to their Obedience; theſe Idolaters might be apt to conclude, that his former power was now decayed, and that their Gods had gained the aſcendant over him, ſince they were called in to the protection of his people.

3. AN *Egyptian* had proved fatal to *Iſrael* in their happieſt State; I mean the Daughter of an *Egyptian* King, who was one of the Wives of King *Solomon*, and helped with other ſtrange Women to entice him to Idolatry. The immediate conſequence of which, by the juſt Judgment of God, was the Diviſion of the twelve Tribes into two Kingdoms, who often waged unnatural Wars one with another. This greateſt of Calamities was haſtened by an *Egyptian* Alliance; and therefore ſuch Alliances are properly ſtigmatized by our Prophet with a Woe.

4. GOD had in general forbidden his People to make Confederacies with any of the Nations round about them, leſt they ſhould defile themſelves with their idolatrous Principles, and abominable Practices; or *leſt they ſhould put their truſt in Man, and make fleſh their Arm, and in their Heart depart from the Lord.* For he had undertaken, by virtue of his ſole divine Power, to defend and preſerve them againſt all their Enemies, ſo long as they continued to be his faithful and loyal People.

THIS was the prime Article of his Covenant with them, and therefore when they choſe a Man to be King over them, though he was one of their Brethren, a Worſhipper of the ſame God, and ſubject to the ſame divine Laws with themſelves; yet God reſented it, as Rebellion againſt himſelf, intimating that by this change of Government, which they had raſhly made,

made, without conſulting him, they had, as far as they could, rejected and depoſed him from reigning over them. This is what he charges upon them in this and the next Chapter, that by ſtrengthening themſelves with human Alliances, they ſought to be independent upon God, and hoped to find out a way for their deliverance from the Sword of their Enemies, without returning to their allegiance to God their King. They could not but know that, ſo long as they walked in the Law of the Lord their God, he would fight for them againſt all their Enemies, that none ſhould be able to prevail over them. And they knew that when they fell into the Adverſaries hand, it was for their Sins. But they had no mind to reform; their great concern was, how to be impious with impunity; to remove the Judgment without quitting the Sin. And therefore when the Armies of Aliens roſe againſt them, they were full of Embaſſies and Treaties of Alliance; they ſought the defence of many Chariots and ſtrong Horſemen; *but they looked not to the holy one of Iſrael, neither ſought the Lord.* They were ſo far from ſeeking him, that they would not endure ſuch Teachers as preached his ſincere and uncorrupt word among them. For, according to the following charge of our Prophet, *they ſaid to the Seers, See not, and to the Prophets, Propheſie not unto us right things; ſpeak unto us ſmooth things, propheſie deceits. Get you out of the way, turn aſide out of the path; cauſe the holy one of Iſrael to ceaſe from before us.*

WE can hardly think that this People were ſo abandoned and loſt to all ſenſe of Shame, as to ſay theſe things to their ſpiritual Guides in ſuch direct and plain Terms as are here ſet down. But we know how they ſaid it as effectually by their Actions. They conferred

red all their favours upon ſuch Prophets, as took care to ſay nothing that was diſpleaſing, or contrary to the prevailing Politicks of their Times, but repreſented God as favourable to their Deſigns, when he was utterly againſt them; *and cryed, Peace, Peace, when there was no Peace.* Theſe Prophets they eſteemed as honeſt, well-affected Men, who were heartily in the intereſt of their Country. Theſe they raiſed to their places of Truſt and Profit, and admitted them to the intimacy of Friends and Counſellors. But the plain-dealing Preachers, who ſpoke to them the Word of the Lord without reſerve or diſguiſe, were the objects of their hatred and averſion, kept down from the rewards and encouragements of their Profeſſion, and removed out of the way, into Priſons and Baniſhment, if they preſumed to declaim againſt the reigning Sins of the Times. Something of this treatment was the common portion of ſuch Servants of God, as the Author of my Text. *I hate Micaiah*, ſaid *Ahab*, *for he never propheſies good concerning me, but evil*, 1 *Kings* xxii. and he ſent him to live upon Bread and Water in a Priſon, for publiſhing a bold, ungrateful Truth. By this kind of treatment, Princes and People ſaid in effect to the true Prophets, *Propheſie not unto us right things; but ſpeak ſmoothly, and propheſie Deceits*; and this no doubt was the meaning of *Iſaiah* in the paſſage here before us.

THE deſign of the Prophet is, to correct the Errors of two ſorts of People.

1. OF thoſe Politicians, who promiſe themſelves a proſperous Iſſue of their Affairs, while their ways are diſpleaſing to God, and they are not careful to reconcile themſelves to him, by ſuitable Acts of Religion, ſo as to obtain his favour and bleſſing upon them.

2. OF

2. OF thoſe who will not receive the divine Word according to its true and genuine Meaning, but only in ſuch a light as is moſt favourable to their carnal Intereſts and corrupt Affections.

AND, 1*ſt*, Men of the beſt capacity and addreſs for great Affairs, will never be able to bring them to a good Iſſue, without due acknowledgments of the Power of God, and applications to him, for his help and aſſiſtance; without which they had better ſit ſtill, as the Prophet here ſpeaks, and not put their hand to any Undertaking.

ONE would think it were needleſs to inſiſt on this Doctrine, *That God is the ſupreme Moderator and Governour of all things.* But there are two reaſons which make it pertinent enough at all times. One is, the Spirit of Mankind, which is generally alienated from God, and always trying to live without him in the World. The other is, that one and the ſame event often happens to the Righteous, and to the Wicked; to him who prayeth, and to him that blaſphemeth; to him that ſweareth, and to him that feareth an Oath.

IT muſt be confeſt, that the greateſt part of thoſe who have the conduct of human affairs, are not much devoted to the worſhip and ſervice of God. So far as we may judge of men by their works, (and by their works the Goſpel allows us to judge of them) we may, without breach of Charity, pronounce of the Councils, Aſſemblies, and Corporations of men, that they are not commonly acted by the Spirit of God, but often fall into meaſures, and purſue ends, which are very wide of the Laws of ſtrict Piety and Virtue.

WE muſt likewiſe acknowledge, that the Adminiſtrations of irreligious men many times ſeem to be crown'd with ſucceſs, as hath been obſerved in all Ages.

But

But if we could make exact obſervations, we ſhould find that they are oftner confounded and defeated. Whenever they proſper, it is for one of theſe three Reaſons following. 1. Either becauſe they preſide over others who are better than themſelves; for whoſe ſervice God may proſper them, very conſiſtently with his Honour and Glory; for *he has promiſed to make all things work together for good to thoſe who love and fear him.* Or 2*dly*, Becauſe he waits to be gracious to the worſt of men, and gives them time and ſpace for Repentance; not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all men ſhould ſee the errors of their ways, and turn to him. Or 3*dly*, Becauſe he uſes one wicked People as a rod and a ſcourge to puniſh another. Thus he threatens to ſet oppreſſive Rulers over an unworthy People, who had abuſed his Mercies, that they might execute his Vengeance upon them. Thus he raiſes up one impious Nation to cut off another by Wars, and then he deſtroys the Conqueror; as he tells *Sennacherib*, 2 *Kings* xix. 'Tis I who have cauſed thee to lay 'fenced Cities into ruinous heaps. I diſmaid and 'confounded their Inhabitants, and made them as the 'graſs of the field before thee; and now becauſe I 'hear thy rage and tumult againſt me, I will put my 'hook into thy noſe, and my bridle into thy lips, 'and will turn thee back by the way by which thou 'cameſt.'

SO likewiſe the ſame Prophets who foretold the Exaltation of *Babylon*, that ſhe ſhould ſit as a Queen above the Nations round about her; declare in their Propheſies, that ſhe ſhould be brought down to the duſt, when ſhe had fulfilled the judgments of God; becauſe ſhe was not exalted for any worthineſs in her ſelf, but only as an Inſtrument in his hand to execute his Vengeance upon others.

FOR

FOR theſe Reaſons wicked men flouriſh and make a blaze for a time, but we ſee in the methods of God's Providence, that they are deſtroyed at the laſt, as all obſerving Writers have teſtified. *The triumphing of the Wicked*, ſays the Book of Job, *is but for a moment. I have ſeen the Ungodly*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *in great Proſperity, and flouriſhing like a green Bay-tree; but in a ſhort time I beheld, and lo he was gone; I ſought him, but his place could no where be found.* And it is the unanimous Voice of Sacred Writers, that though wicked men abound in Riches, and have all the defence of ſtrong Towns, numerous Armies, powerful Alliances, yet they ſhall not eſcape unpuniſhed, nor ſhall their Wiſdom or Politicks avail them, ſo long as he who is higher than the higheſt, is againſt them.

AND therefore the ſtouteſt and braveſt of men, who have been truly wiſe, have ever begun their weighty Affairs, with ſeeking the face and favour of God; they have diſclaimed all Confidence in Sword and Bow, and human means, which though needful for our Defence and Safe-guard, yet are not able to procure it without the Bleſſing of God. For *except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain.*

THIS is what *Iſaiah* would teach his People in this Chapter, when he tells them, *the Egyptians ſhall help you in vain and to no purpoſe; the ſtrength of Pharaoh ſhall be your ſhame, and your truſt in his ſhadow your confuſion, while you take Counſel, but not of the Lord, and cover you with a covering, but not of his Spirit.*

2*dly*, HE would correct the error of thoſe men, who will not receive the divine word according to its true and genuine meaning; but chuſe to have it gloſs'd and coloured with ſuch a ſenſe as is moſt favourable to their

carnal Intereſts, and corrupt Affections. How fond the ancient *Jews* were of ſuch Gloſſes, we have heard; and their Deſcendents were the Heirs of this infatuation, making the word of God of none effect by their corrupt Traditions and falſe Comments upon it; for which abuſes both Fathers and Children were deſervedly puniſhed and carried into Captivity.

NOW this is a ſtrange and ſottiſh kind of Perverſeneſs, to be willing to hear nothing of God's word, but what is ſoft and pleaſing to us. For can we by ſuch Precautions flatter our ſelves that we ſhall eſcape the effects of his diſpleaſure? Any man may with as good reaſon ſtop his ears at the proclamation of a Law, or hire another to read it to him in much ſofter words than it was pen'd, and then go his way, and live in the avow'd breach of it, without apprehending that he ſhall ever be called to an account, or ſuffer for it. But this is not the way of the World, nor will ſuch jeſting and trifling be endured in human Government. And the abſurdity is as great, and the danger far greater, in dealing thus with the Word of God. It is in effect adding to it and taking away from it at our own pleaſure; which Practice the ſame holy Word has prohibited, under the ſevereſt Penalties both of the preſent and future ſtate.

THIS is a point which deſerves our moſt ſerious regard and attention. For I believe there is not a man, and perhaps there never was, who is poſſeſſed with any beloved Error or favourite Luſt, or zealouſly addicted to any Faction or ſecular Intereſt, but he makes more or leſs of the divine Word, juſt as it may ſerve his purpoſe. Men firſt reſolve to do their own will, and abound in their own ſenſe, and then it ſhall go hard but they will find a way to reconcile it with their duty. We find

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our own People apt and ready in ſuch kind of Sophiſtry; and we cannot doubt but the *Jews* here ſpoken of, were as ſubtle Caſuiſts in their own concerns. God had, for ſeveral good reaſons, forbid them to make any league, offenſive or defenſive, with the *Egyptians*. And this was forbidden them in very plain and poſitive terms. Yet they broke through this Law ſeveral times, and perſuaded themſelves, no doubt, that there were circumſtances and reaſons of State which ſuperſeded the Obligation of it, and that it was to give way to Neceſſity, which is the common Plea of all Libertines. But this Plea was the more inexcuſable in them, becauſe their Prophets, *Iſaiah* and *Jeremiah*, aſſured them by immediate Revelation, that God conſtantly exacted their Obedience to this Law. And this People were ſtill more intolerable, in charging theſe Prophets, as they did, with ſpeaking falſely in the name of the Lord, ſince what they declared, was perfectly agreeable to his known and written Will.

THIS ſhews the deſperate ſtate of an obſtinate Mind; it will fight againſt the cleareſt light of Religion and Reaſon, and refuſes to be perſuaded by the moſt convincing Arguments, and unqueſtionable word of God himſelf. It is no uncommon thing to ſee ſome People who profeſs a Zeal for Religion, and place much of it in ſome ſingular Opinion; if a man touch their error with a plain argument from Sacred Scripture, how paſſionate they grow; and though they would ſeem to value their *Bible* above all things, yet when it is plainly againſt them, they as plainly declare themſelves againſt it.

THERE is but one way that I know of, to cure this over-weening obſtinate Spirit; and that is, to introduce the good Spirit of God in the room of it,

whoſe moſt eminent fruits are Long-ſuffering, Meekneſs, and Humility. For he that has a Heart prepared to do the Will of God, will be watchful over his own carnal Will, leſt it get the dominion over him, and he who heartily ſeeks after that wiſdom which is from above, will not be wiſe in his own conceit. The firſt leſſon of a child of God, is to deny himſelf, and learn abſolute Obedience to his Heavenly Father.

THIS is a great Work, and not to be accompliſhed without much Prayer, and daily care to bring our Hearts and Minds under the government of God's Law; for which end let us *beſeech him to work in us both to will and to do thoſe things which are pleaſing in his ſight*; that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and alſo may have Grace and Power conſtantly to fulfill them; through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. To whom, *&c.*

SERMON CX.

On the Fourth Sunday *in* ADVENT.

EVENING.

ISAIAH xxxii. 1.

Behold, a king ſhall reign in righteouſneſs, and princes ſhall rule in judgment.

IN the eight firſt verſes of this Chapter is contained the deſcription of a good King, who by his wiſe and gracious Government reforms the publick diſorders of his Country, giving all due encouragement to Piety and Virtue, and effectually ſuppreſſing Atheiſm and Immorality. And becauſe *Iſaiah* ſpeaks expreſly of two good Kings, *viz. Hezekiah* who reigned in his own time, and *Meſſiah* whoſe coming into the world he foreſaw, therefore Interpreters underſtand theſe words of both their Governments, the one as the type, the other as the antitype. Accordingly we will take occaſion from hence to conſider the character of a good King in general, and ſhew that our Lord *Jeſus*, whom we acknowledge to be the *Meſſiah*, the King from Heaven, hath anſwered this character.

AND firſt, *A King*, ſays our Prophet, *ſhall reign in*, or as the *Hebrew* ſignifies, *for righteouſneſs:* i. e. he ſhall be righteous in his own perſon, and ſuch ſhall be his whole adminiſtration. This word *righteouſneſs*, is of a very extenſive ſignification; it imports the fulfilling of the whole Law of God; it includes our truſt and affiance in him, that he will be with us and bleſs us in the performance of our duty, and the diſcharge of a good conſcience. The righteous man, ſo highly celebrated and applauded in holy Scripture, is not only one who is true and juſt in all his dealings, diligent and faithful in that office, imployment, or ſtate of life, to which God hath called him; but he is likewiſe of a compaſſionate, charitable, and beneficent Spirit; he loves his neighbour as himſelf, and does unto all men the ſame things which he might reaſonably wiſh and hope ſhould be done to him, were he in their condition. He does not ſatisfy himſelf with the bare obſervance of human Laws, ſo far as that none may be able to charge him with any thing that is ill; but he ſtudies moreover to abound in all thoſe good works, which are the peculiar fruits of the Spirit of God, and which may demonſtrate him to be one of God's children, ſent into the world for the benefit and comfort of mankind. *The righteous*, ſays the holy Pſalmiſt, xxxvii. *is ever merciful and liberal. His mouth is exerciſed in wiſdom, and his tongue will be talking of judgment*, i. e. of ſuch things as are pleaſing to God, and profitable to the hearers. For which reaſon *Solomon* ſays, that *the tongue of the juſt is as choice ſilver*, that *his lips feed many:* that *by the bleſſing of the upright the city is exalted*; and that *when ſuch are in authority, the citizens rejoice.* And St. *Paul* obſerves, *Rom.* v. that righteous men are generally ſo well

well beloved, that ſome might be found who would even lay down their lives for them.

AND thus much of the excellency of righteouſneſs in general; which a good King will take care to advance in its utmoſt latitude. And indeed he is the likelieſt man in his whole Kingdom to ſpeed it well, and make it the delight of all his people. For his practice is the ſtandard and fountain-head of their manners; which when it is enforced with the due adminiſtration of Laws, what an infinite deal of good muſt it needs produce?

SUCH a King we may juſtly preſume *Hezekiah* to have been. For tho' his character is not branched out into all the particulars of righteouſneſs which I have mentioned, yet that which the Scripture ſays of him in general, is ſufficient to infer them all. 'Tis affirmed then of him, that he truſted in God, and adhered to him with all his heart, and departed not from following him, but kept all his commandments, doing that which was good and right in his eyes. The hiſtory of his Reformation of divine Worſhip from the corruptions which had overſpread it, and the deliverances and bleſſings which God vouchſafed him thereupon, confirm the truth of this character. When it is ſaid, *he put his truſt in the Lord*, there is a great emphaſis in this ſaying. For at the beginning of his reign, he had many difficulties and dangers to encounter, if he would do the part of a good King. Errors in Religion were, by inveterate cuſtom, eſtabliſhed for truth; and at the ſame time he was under the yoke of an idolatrous and victorious King, the King of *Aſſyria*. Notwithſtanding, he ſoon rid himſelf both of the one and the other, becauſe he truſted in God, that he would bleſs and protect him, as

he did moſt effectually, in the way of his bounden duty.

THIS was great: And yet but a ſhadow of that righteouſneſs which was to follow in the perſon and reign of the *Meſſiah*; whom we confeſs to be our Lord *Jeſus*. That he was to be a King, is implied in the very name; and the predictions thereof are too many and too well known to need recital. This King our Lord owned himſelf to be from firſt to laſt. *Rabbi*, ſaid *Nathanael* to him at his firſt appearance in publick, *thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Iſrael.* Again, when he made his triumphant entry into *Jeruſalem*, a little before his paſſion, it was done, ſay the Evangeliſts, to fulfil that prophecy which ſays, *Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and ſitting upon an aſs, and a colt the foal of an aſs.* And when the Chief Prieſts and Scribes called out to him to ſilence the multitudes who ſung Hoſanna's to him upon this occaſion, he anſwered, *I tell you, if theſe ſhould hold their peace, the very ſtones would cry out*, and teſtify the ſame thing. Laſtly, when *Pilate* urged him at his trial to declare, whether or no he were the *King of the Jews*, he anſwered in the affirmative, and added that he was born into the world for this very purpoſe, that he might *bear witneſs to the truth*, i. e. that he might reign in righteouſneſs.

THAT he ſo reigns, is as evident, as that he is a King. In his Perſon he fulfilled it: in his Doctrine he taught it. At the very beginning of which he apprizes his hearers, that their righteouſneſs muſt exceed that of the Scribes and Phariſees, and he ſhews them directly ſeveral caſes wherein it muſt exceed. Several caſes wherein the glory of God, and the good

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of mankind were highly concerned. Thus he began to repair the breaches of both Tables of the ſacred Decalogue. And with a merit ſuperior to that of any other Reformer.

DID *Hezekiah* reform in difficult times? He had however a Kingdom in this World, a Crown and Dignity to ſupport him in it. But our Lord ſet about this work under greater diſadvantages. *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.* He found his Throne, his Temple, his *Jeruſalem*, all poſſeſſed by thoſe who were his implacable enemies. *Herod* and *Pontius Pilate*, Prieſts, Scribes and Phariſees, derided him, blaſphemed him, crucified him, and yet in the end he conquered them all. Foreſeeing this, he addreſſed himſelf to his reformation with intrepidity, and reproved the reigning enormities without reſpect of perſons, which with us would have been called, flying in the face of Government. Perhaps we ſhould have called it ſo in him, had we been his Countrymen and Cotemporaries. Perhaps they that ſaid ſo, called it by ſome ſuch name. But this did not hinder him from proſecuting the work which he came to do in the world. He knew the goodneſs of it, and truſted God for the ſucceſs. I ſpeak of him as a man, and as the Prophets ſpeak of him in that capacity. So prays *David* in the perſon of the *Meſſiah*, Pſal. xxii. *Be not thou far from me, O Lord: thou art my ſtrength; haſte thee to help me.* So ſpeaks *Iſaiah* of him, chap. liii. *The Lord who was pleaſed to bruiſe him, ſhall prolong his days, and proſper the work in his hands.* So ſays our Lord of himſelf, *John* v. *I can of my ſelf do nothing.* And chap. ix. *I muſt work the works of him that ſent me.* And chap. xi. *I thank thee, O father, that thou haſt heard me: and I knew that thou heareſt me always.*

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It was the Kingdom of God which he came to erect among men, and therefore agreeable to that general Law of juſtice, that he ſhould obey God rather than men. This Kingdom had been given him by many ancient prophecies, particularly that eminent one in the ſecond *Pſalm*, that tho' the Kings of the Earth ſtood up, and the Rulers took counſel againſt him, yet he ſhould be eſtabliſhed upon the holy Hill of *Sion*. And therefore, as I noted before, he came unto his own; he was Lord of the Temple, it was his Father's houſe; he had a right to cleanſe it and reform it, as he did.

AGAIN, did *Hezekiah* ſhake off the oppreſſive yoke of the King of *Aſſyria?* Our Lord reſcued his Kingdom from the tyranny of Sin and *Satan*, into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God. Sin and *Satan* had ſo far deluded poor mortals, as to get the dominion over them, in the exerciſe of which they afflicted them with all ſorts of calamities both of body and mind. For their work is drudgery, and their wages death. In order to redeem us from theſe calamities, he recalls us to a ſerious obedience of God's Laws; to love him with all our heart and ſoul and ſtrength and mind, and our neighbours as our ſelves. Which is the ſure and only way to true happineſs. For without the love of God, we cannot have the benefit of his protection; and wanting his protection, how much worſe than nothing are theſe helpleſs bodies and ſouls of ours? Wanting him, we are all nakedneſs without, and darkneſs within. Every creature, viſible and inviſible, from the greateſt to the ſmalleſt, is able to torment us and deſtroy us.

BUT if God be for us, none of them can be againſt us ſo as to hurt us, for they are all entirely

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ſubject to him, and neceſſarily obey his voice. The truth of this our Lord has demonſtrated to us, by caſting out Devils, healing the ſick, raiſing the dead, ſtilling the winds and ſeas, and doing every thing for the good of mankind, with the bare word of his mouth. Whereby he proved himſelf to be a King indeed; and taught us at the ſame time to ſecure to our ſelves the love and favour of God, by praying to him, worſhipping him, and keeping his commandments, and then to fear nothing, for nothing can hurt us.

WITH reſpect to the things about us, he hath taught us many leſſons very contrary to the prevailing opinions of mankind; as, that our life and happineſs conſiſt not in the abundance of good things which we poſſeſs, but much rather in acts of beneficence and humanity, in ſhewing our ſelves hoſpitable, friendly, and charitable to all men, as occaſion ſhall require. That when we have done our beſt to oblige and benefit mankind, we muſt expect much ingratitude and unſuitable treatment both in word and deed. That it will not help our ſelves, to hurt them, nor make us a juſt amends to requite them in their own way: But that to love them that hate us, to bleſs them that curſe us, to do good to them that deſpitefully uſe us, is the moſt likely way to put an end to their hatred, and to procure that peace and love which is abſolutely neceſſary for the happineſs of the World. That poſſibly by ſuch a conduct we may overcome evil with good: At leaſt we ſhall approve our ſelves to be the children of him who is kind to the unthankful and unholy, and entitle our ſelves to his favour and reward in a future ſtate. With reſpect to the eſteem, honours, and preferments in the world, he

has

has taught us not to be aſſuming, not to aſpire above others, that we may lord it over them: Not to thruſt our ſelves ambitiouſly into any place, dignity, or buſineſs, before we have a proper call to it. This is the advice which he gave to his contending Diſciples: 'When you are bidden to a feaſt, ſit down at the 'lower end; and ſtrive not for the higheſt ſtations in 'my Kingdom. But whoſoever will be great among 'you, ſhall be your Miniſter. And whoever of you 'will be chief, let him be ſervant of all. Even as I 'came not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter. And 'if I, your Lord and Maſter, have condeſcended to 'do the loweſt ſervices for you, ye ought to do the 'ſame one for another.'

FINALLY, with reſpect to our ſelves, our Lord has rectified thoſe falſe opinions which we are apt to entertain concerning pleaſures: Aſſuring us, that the way to happineſs is ſtraight and narrow; that not he who indulges, but he who reſtrains and mortifies his ſenſual cravings, is the happy man. That we ſhould lay up our treaſure in the Kingdom of Heaven, and hunger and thirſt for the joys of it, more than for any thing which this world can afford. That thoſe who mourn now, ſhall there receive the greateſt comfort; they that humble themſelves now, ſhall there be moſt highly exalted; they that deny themſelves the pomps and vanities of this world, ſhall ſhine there in the brighteſt glory. That if we lay down our life for God's ſake, we cannot loſe it, becauſe he is the fountain of life, and will raiſe us from this weak, tranſitory, mortal ſtate, to live for ever in perfect health and vigour in his own preſence and heavenly Kingdom.

THUS

THUS does our Lord reign in righteouſneſs, by the juſt title and claim which he has to our Obedience, by the redemption from Sin and *Satan*, which he hath wrought for us, by the wholeſome laws which he hath enacted for our Government, by the reaſonable ſervice which he demands of us, by the protection and comfort which he now affords us, and by the exceeding great rewards which he has prepared for us.

IT follows in my Text, *And princes ſhall rule in judgment*. Who indeed are neceſſary concomitants of a righteous King's reign, to extend the benefits of it. For by *Princes* here, we underſtand ſubordinate Magiſtrates and Officers, who act under the King in executing the Laws, and watching over the People. And as the natural body of man, tho' otherwiſe vigorous, is much hindred in its actions, if it be lame in the hands or feet: So the body politick can never be well governed, notwithſtanding the goodneſs of the Head, if it be deficient in ſubordinate Magiſtrates and Miniſters. With a view to ſuch a conſtitution I ſuppoſe it was, that *Plato* wiſhes *Kings would be converſant with Philoſophers*; by whom no doubt he means ſuch as we now call wiſe and faithful Counſellors, who ſhould be ready to aſſiſt him in all affairs of Government which might want good advice, and be his Monitors to recover him from any wrong way which he might happen to take.

TO the ſame purpoſe is the advice of *Iſocrates* the *Athenian* Orator to a King of his Acquaintance, touching his conduct in Government. 'Do not, ſays 'he, promiſcuouſly admit for your friends, all thoſe 'that are ambitious to be ſuch; but thoſe only that 'are

'are worthy your genius: Not thoſe with whom you 'may paſs the time moſt pleaſantly, but thoſe by 'whoſe aſſiſtance you may beſt adminiſter your Go-'vernment.— Appoint ſuch perſons for the diſcharge 'of Imployments which you cannot execute your 'ſelf, as you are perſuaded will anſwer your expecta-'tion, ſince you will be ſure to be accountable for 'their actions.— Eſteem thoſe men as your beſt con-'fidents, not who ſhall applaud all that you ſay or do, 'but who ſhall be ready to apprize you of any error 'in your Government.—— Give liberty of ſpeech to 'the prudent and wiſe, that you may have the bene-'fit of their examination and diſcuſſion of thoſe mat-'ters, which may prove too difficult for you.—— 'Do not reckon thoſe to be wiſe men, that are nice 'canvaſſers of minute and trifling matters; but thoſe 'that can ſpeak to the purpoſe in affairs of the great-'eſt weight and moment.—— Diſtinguiſh and make 'much of the men of parts, that can ſee a great deal 'farther than the reſt: Knowing that an able and 'faithful Counſellor, is the moſt uſeful treaſure that 'a King can be poſſeſſed of. Laſtly, conclude them 'to be moſt likely to enlarge your Dominions, who 'are moſt capable of improving your mind.' Thus far *Iſocrates*.

AND whereas he recommends to his King's peruſal the grave maxims of *Heſiod*, *Theognis*, and other *Greek* Writers, as excellent inſtructions for the conduct of human life in all circumſtances, I doubt not but he would much rather have recommended thoſe ſacred Oracles which are written for our learning in the word of God, had he been acquainted with them. For they are indited by the Spirit of that God, by whom

whom Kings reign, and Princes decree juſtice: who ſtands in their congregations, and calls upon them to defend the poor, the fatherleſs, and the widow; to ſee that ſuch as are in need and neceſſity, have right done them.

WHEN Kings reign agreeably to this word, and Princes rule by the Laws, Statutes, and Judgments of this God, then will certainly be fulfilled that which follows my Text in this Chapter, that *the people will find an hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the ſtorm: rivers of waters in dry places, and ſhadows in a weary land*, i. e. under ſuch a Government thoſe who were formerly oppreſſed, ſhall be relieved, unrighteous Magiſtrates ſhall be removed, wrongful dealings for the future ſhall be prevented: Which will be as welcome to the poor people, as the refuge of a covert, ſtreams of water, and ſhades are to travellers in a parched land.

THEN the eyes of the ſeers ſhall not be dim: and the ears of the hearers ſhall hearken. The Prophets, who are called *Seers*, ſhall have clearer viſions of the Will of God; and the People ſhall be more tractable and attentive to hear them. *The heart alſo of the raſh and fooliſh ſhall underſtand knowledge: and the tongue of the ſtammerers ſhall be looſed to ſpeak plainly.* Falſe Prophets ſhall be ſilenced and removed out of the way, that they may no longer miſ-lead the ſimple, illiterate people; and the teachers of truth ſhall have their tongue at liberty, to preach the word of God freely and impartially, as they ought to preach it. *The vile perſon ſhall be no more called liberal, nor the churl ſaid to be bountiful*; or, as our old tranſlation has it, *the niggard ſhall not paſs for a gentleman.* Theſe are brief and general

general hints of the reformation of manners which ſhould be wrought under *Hezekiah* and other good Kings: when care ſhould be taken to prevent bribery and corruption in Magiſtrates and Courts of Juſtice: when a high title and ſplendid appearance ſhould no longer ſet the ſtamp of lawful authority upon wicked practices: when the houſes of vanity and corruption ſhould be ſhut up, and ceaſe to fill the minds of people with idle and hurtful amuſements, and leave them free to attend upon matters of more ſerious and ſubſtantial conſideration. In ſhort, when piety and virtue ſhould have their due rewards and encouragements, and all iniquity be treated as the peſt of ſociety, and the canker of all publick good.

THIS Government is very much to the pleaſure of the moſt High, who delights to ſee loving-kindneſs, judgment, and righteouſneſs exerciſed in the Earth; and it is well ſuited to the condition of men who are created after the Image of God, and are capable of improving this Image by a ſtrict diſcipline of piety and virtue, ſo as to be advanced in time to his more immediate preſence in his heavenly Kingdom. A ſample of this Government was given by *Hezekiah*, but the perfection of it was reſerved for the *Meſſiah*'s reign, whoſe royal character we have ſeen before; and his all-ſufficient Power is well known, by his opening the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf, and cauſing the tongue of the ſtammerers to ſpeak plainly: Which he performed in the literal, but much more amply in the ſpiritual ſenſe. For in the firſt capacity, as a bodily healer, he was ſent only to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of *Iſrael*; but as a ſpiritual Phyſician he has opened the eyes and ears of mankind in general.

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His righteouſneſs hath been univerſally manifeſted in the ſight of the Heathen. His Spirit inſpired ignorant men with the gift of various tongues, to publiſh his excellent Laws in a moſt intelligible manner to people of all Nations and Languages; ſo that *all the ends of the earth have ſeen the ſalvation of our God.* The ſame Spirit has opened the hearts of all orders of men to receive theſe Laws, and warmed them with zeal to erect Schools and Churches, where all ſorts of people might be inſtructed in them throughout all generations. Their hearts and heads, which would have been ſtupidly ignorant, are now full of the knowledge of the Lord. Their eyes ſee, their ears hear, their tongues ſpeak of thoſe heavenly things, to which by nature they were blind, and deaf, and dumb.

WE cannot look upon the progreſs which the Goſpel has had in the world, but we muſt behold this King reigning in Righteouſneſs, and the Princes of his Religion ruling in Judgment. For notwithſtanding the many imperfections which muſt needs be found in the Church of Chriſt, ſo long as ſhe continues in a militant condition, which our Lord intimated by the parable of the tares and wheat; moſt certain it is, and eaſy to be proved, that all Nations where Chriſtianity has prevailed, have been much benefited by it, even in their temporal and politick capacity. The ſpirit of truth, loving-kindneſs and charity which it propagates, where-ever its doctrines are duly inculcated and regarded, has undeniably produced, and is daily producing, abundance of good fruits. Which all conſiderate Princes have acknowledged, and took ſuitable care for the cheriſhing of the root. Particularly King *James* I. in thoſe rules of Government which he writ for the uſe of his ſon, charges

him to ſee, 'that all Churches of his Dominions were 'ſupplied with good Miniſters, that he ſhould have 'an eye to the maintenance of Schools and Places of 'virtuous Education, and take care to defend the 'Doctrines and Diſcipline of Chriſtianity according 'to the word of God.'

MAY all Chriſtian Princes, and all Magiſtrates and Miniſters under them, make this word the rule and meaſure of their Lives and Government. Then may we hope to ſee thoſe happy days which the Prophets and Apoſtles ſaw with an eye of faith in their ſpiritual Viſions, *When all the Kingdoms of the world ſhall become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt:* To whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

SERMON CXI.

On CHRISTMAS-DAY.

MORNING.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder, and his name ſhall be called, Wonderful, Counſellor, the mighty God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace.

THE reaſon why theſe words are appointed to be read at this time is, becauſe we underſtand them to be a deſcription of the *Meſſiah*: and we have learned ſo to underſtand them from the ancient *Jewiſh* Commentators, tho' their modern writers will needs apply them to *Hezekiah*, againſt all the rules of grammar and common ſenſe, and for no imaginable reaſon, but to deprive us Chriſtians of an eminent proof of the truth of our Religion.

A little before, chap. vii. the Prophet had told *Ahaz*, *Hezekiah*'s Father, that *a virgin* of his family *ſhould conceive and bear a ſon, and ſhould call his*

name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, *God with us*. Now here in my Text he ſays, *Unto us a child is born, unto us a ſon is given*. It is not doubted but that he means the ſame child in both places; and by theſe laſt words one would think he was then actually born; which would be many hundreds of years too ſoon for our purpoſe. But becauſe no man ever came into the world, to whom the character in my Text could belong, except *Jeſus Chriſt* alone; therefore we muſt ſay, and we ſay nothing that is ſtrained or uncommon in the Prophets, that *Iſaiah* ſpeaks agreeably to his Viſion; and ſeeing in his ſpiritual Viſion that ſuch a child would be born, he ſpeaks of his birth as if it were already fulfilled, intimating hereby that it was as certain, as any thing that was then done and paſt. This is a common ſtyle with the Prophets, to ſpeak of things to come, as if they had been actually accompliſhed in their own days, becauſe they knew that by the decree of God the accompliſhment of them was ſure and infallible.

WE will proceed therefore to examine the characters and epithets here given of this child, and ſhow that they all agree very exactly to the account which the Goſpels give of our bleſſed Lord.

I. THIS child is here ſtyled *wonderful:* And who ſo wonderful as our Lord and Saviour, in his birth, which was foretold by an Angel, accompliſhed by a pure Virgin, proclaimed by the heavenly Powers to the Shepherds and wiſe Men of the *Eaſt?* Who ſo wonderful in his preſervation from the fate of the children maſſacred by *Herod*, and from divers attempts made afterwards upon his life by the envious *Jews?* Who ſo wonderful in the favour of God, who owned him for his ſon by audible voices from Heaven; and in mighty

mighty works which he daily wrought, healing the ſick, raiſing the dead, cleanſing lepers, caſting out Devils? Who ſo wonderful as he, who raiſed his own body from the grave, and aſcended with it into Heaven in the preſence of many ſpectators, and ſent down his promiſed Spirit upon the Apoſtles, and endued them with power to work the ſame miracles as he had done?

THESE things do not ſeem ſo ſtrange to many of us, becauſe we are brought up from our infancy in the reading and hearing of them; which familiarity abates of their ſurprize. But if we would ſeriouſly conſider them, and lay them together, and compare our Lord in theſe reſpects with all the Hiſtories that ever came to our knowledge, we ſhall be fully convinced that he was the moſt wonderful perſon that was ever born into the world.

II. THIS child is ſtyled *Counſellor:* And ſuch was Chriſt to us in the moſt eminent manner. He came from the boſom of the Father to make all his will and pleaſure known to mankind. And he aſſures us, *Matth.* xi. 27. that *no man knows the Father, but the Son, and he to whomſoever the Son ſhall reveal him.* What can we ſay more of him, than thoſe comprehenſive words of the Goſpel denote, wherein he is celebrated as the Light, the Truth, the Wiſdom of God? There was a thick gloom and vail of ignorance upon the hearts of men, till the coming of Chriſt, as the Prophet intimates in this and the foregoing Chapters: But when this ſun of righteouſneſs aroſe upon the world, the people that walked in darkneſs ſaw his light, and they that dwelt in the land of the ſhadow of death, upon them his light ſhined.

TO ſpeak more diſtinctly upon this head: Chriſt is our Counſellor upon a threefold account.

1. AS he hath reformed and rectified our notions of the Deity, and turned us from the worſhip of dumb idols, to ſerve the living and true God. We were of the number of thoſe, who, to ſpeak in the language of our Prophet, *ſought unto familiar ſpirits and wizards*, applying to our implacable enemies for ſuccour, and ſeeking our welfare of the authors of all our calamities and miſeries. What a multitude of pretended, uſurping Deities were then to be found in our Temples; and what a tedious train of rites and ceremonies did each of them require in the performance of their worſhip?

BUT now our heavenly Counſellor has reſcued us from thoſe many Lords which once had the dominion over us, and aſſured us, that all the Deity we are to worſhip, is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three Perſons, but one God, who requires no ſacrifice of us, comparable to that of a devout, holy, and upright heart. *For*, ſays he, *my Father ſeeketh thoſe who will worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.*

THE articles of our Faith are now ſummed up in a ſhort Creed, ſhort in words, but weighty in ſubſtance, and not to be known by any other method of knowledge, but only by the revelation of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

2. CHRIST is our Counſellor as he hath taught us the Truths of the moral Law, and the real difference between good and evil. Concerning which how apt both *Jews* and *Gentiles* were to miſtake, we may learn from his Sermon on the Mount. Which if we had never known, we might have thought that the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees there repreſented would have carried us to Heaven; but now we

are

are ſure that it will not. Now we know that the humble, the meek, the pure in heart, the perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake, are bleſſed; that it is much more for our advantage to ſuffer injuries than to do them; to feaſt the poor rather than the rich; to give and lend where nothing can be hoped for again, and to deny our ſenſual appetites, much better than to indulge them. Such are the counſels of our bleſſed Lord, which he has authorized and enforced with his own moſt perfect, holy, and upright example.

3. CHRIST is our Counſellor, as he hath inſtructed us in the Means whereby we may obtain everlaſting Salvation. He hath ſet open his heavenly Kingdom for the reception of all thoſe who believe in him, and he has revealed the way to it ſo fully and clearly, that the moſt ſimple and illiterate perſon, who brings an honeſt reſolution to walk in it, cannot miſtake it. 'He that believeth, and is baptized, he that eateth 'my fleſh and drinketh my blood, he that heareth my 'word and doth it, ſhall not periſh, but have ever-'laſting life.' This is his promiſe; and he hath informed us of the method how he will perform it, which is, not by continuing us always in the bodies we are now in, for this would be more properly eternal death than life; ſuch fleſh and blood as we now carry about us, cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: But after death has diſſolved us and laid us in our graves, our Lord will raiſe us up again, in circumſtances quite different from our preſent condition, and inveſt us with ſuch glory as adorns his own perſon, and eſtabliſh us for ever in his immortal Kingdom. This, I confeſs, is now trite and common Doctrine; but it would not have been known to us, or at leaſt not ſo known as to have had a due effect upon us and

commanded our faith, if he had not revealed it to us. And therefore to him our Counſellor and Inſtructor it is owing, that we know and believe this.

III. THE third character which is given to this child ſaid here to be born, is, *the mighty God*. This correſponds with that which was ſaid before, chap. vii. *They ſhall call his name Immanuel*, which being interpreted is, *God with us*. To the ſame purpoſe is that of *Jerem.* xxiii. *Behold, the days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will raiſe unto David a righteous branch, and a King ſhall reign and proſper, and ſhall execute judgment and juſtice on the earth. And this is the name whereby he ſhall be called*, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. And the ſame he repeats again, xxxiii. 16. There are many more predictions in the Law and the Prophets, that God ſhould be incarnate and born into the world, which I will not now inſiſt on, having mentioned them upon other occaſions. The obſervation which I think proper to make upon them is this; that theſe Scriptures could not be fulfilled in any of the Kings of *Judah*, nor in any other perſon that was ever born into the world before the nativity which we now celebrate. There have been, I confeſs, ſome Kings of the *Gentiles*, ſuch as *Alexander* of *Macedon*, and others before and after him, who were very fond of being thought to be deſcended from their Gods: But then they were ſuch Gods as no good man would deſire to be allied to; and theſe pretenders have demonſtrated, both by their lives and deaths, that they were meer mortal, ſinful creatures. It is left therefore to onr bleſſed Lord alone, to be God as well as Man. This the Holy Ghoſt pre-ſignified, the Angels proclaimed, and the whole Church of Chriſt, *i. e.* many millions of people, have always believed.

THIS

THIS is the character of *Jeſus Chriſt*, from the beginning to the end of the *New Teſtament*, that he is God as well as Man. He affirms it of himſelf in his diſputes with the *Jews*; 'I am before *Abra-*'*ham*, I am *David*'s Lord: I and my Father (meaning 'God) are one.' And in his diſcourſe with his Diſciples, 'I came out from the Father, and am come 'into the World: Again I leave the World, and go 'to the Father.' And in his laſt prayer, *John* xvii. 'Glorifie me, O Father, with thine own ſelf, even 'with the Glory which I had with thee before the 'World was.'

THIS is the doctrine which his Evangeliſts, Apoſtles, and Miniſters conſtantly taught of him, That he was God from all Eternity: That by him all things were made in the beginning, and are ſtill upheld by the word of his Power: That being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, he humbled himſelf, became man, and was born of the family of *David*, true and rightful King of the *Jews*. That this is he of whom *Moſes* in the Law and the Prophets did write, the Chriſt of God.

THIS claim of our Lord, and theſe teſtimonies of his Apoſtles, were abundantly confirmed both by his own mighty works, and by the like works which they wrought in his name. So that he was moſt powerfully and undeniably manifeſted to be the Son of God.

IV. THE fourth part of this child's character is, that he ſhould be called *the everlaſting Father*, which at firſt ſight ſeems impoſſible to be applied to our bleſſed Lord, who claims only to be the Son of God, the ſecond Perſon in the Trinity: And in this ſenſe indeed it is impoſſible for him to be the everlaſting Father; but in this ſenſe the word *Father* is not

here

here to be underſtood. Our *Engliſh* tranſlation of this place is ſomething improper and unintelligible: The LXX and other Interpreters render it, *Father of the age or world to come*, which is very agreeable to the original, and makes this plain Senſe, that the child here ſpoken of, ſhould be the Father, *i. e.* the Author or Founder of an everlaſting Kingdom. This now is ſo proper and peculiar to our Lord, that it can belong to none other. For he has erected a ſpiritual Kingdom in the World, which has laſted near ſeventeen hundred years, and ſhall continue, as he hath aſſured us, to the day of Judgment; and then it ſhall be conſummate and completed in the Kingdom of Heaven. Of this Kingdom *Iſaiah* gives us an excellent deſcription, chap. xi. and both he and other of the Prophets exhibit many pleaſing views of it in their ſpiritual Viſions. They ſtyle it a new Heaven and new Earth, wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs, and together with that, all manner of ſincere and ſubſtantial felicity. The prophecies of this Kingdom are alluded to, and applied to the Chriſtian Diſpenſation throughout the *New Teſtament*. The Angel *Gabriel*, in his Salutation of the bleſſed Virgin, aſſures her, that *of her Son's Kingdom there ſhould be no end*. In the beginning of his Miniſtry he ordained his twelve Apoſtles to go and preach this Kingdom. At the end of it he declares, *all power is given unto me, in heaven and earth. To this end*, ſays St. *Paul*, *Rom.* xiv. *Chriſt both died, and roſe, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living*. And to him the ſame Apoſtle, *Heb.* i. applies thoſe paſſages of *Pſalm* xlv. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a ſcepter of righteouſneſs is the ſcepter of thy kingdom*, &c. Finally, St. *John* in his Revelation xi, heard great voices in Heaven, ſaying, *The kingdoms*

kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Chriſt; and he ſhall reign for ever and ever.

THUS we ſee how this fourth part of the character, *the everlaſting Father*, tho' it be obſcured by our tranſlation, yet as it ſtands in the original, and as it is rendred by other Interpreters, is applicable to our Lord, and to him only, that he is the Father or Founder of an everlaſting Kingdom.

V. The laſt part of the child's character here ſpoken of, is, that he ſhould be called, *the Prince of Peace:* This was an eminent title of the *Meſſiah*; and this bleſſing of his reign was much celebrated by the Prophets. 'In his time, ſays the Pſalmiſt, ſhall the righ-'teous flouriſh, yea and abundance of peace, ſo 'long as the moon endureth. Mercy and truth ſhall 'meet together; righteouſneſs and peace ſhall kiſs 'each other. In Chriſt's reign, ſays *Iſaiah*, chap. ii. 'people ſhall beat their ſwords into plow-ſhares, and 'their ſpears into pruning-hooks: Nation ſhall not 'lift up ſword againſt Nation, neither ſhall they learn 'war any more. In his reign, ſays he, chap. xi. the 'wolf and the lamb, the leopard and kid, the calf 'and the lion, the cow and the bear, ſhall all herd 'and feed together, and a little child ſhall manage 'them:' Intimating hereby, that people of all Nations and Tempers ſhould unite and love one another in the Church of Chriſt. Much more might be cited from the Prophets to this purpoſe: But I haſten to the *New Teſtament*, to ſhow there how the prophetick Characters of this King and Kingdom of Peace were fulfilled in our bleſſed Lord.

AND *Firſt*, We learn from the *Roman* Hiſtorians, that at the time of our Lord's Nativity, the temple of *Janus* at *Rome* was ſhut up; in token of a profound peace all over the World: For the *Romans* being then

Lords

Lords of the World, had power to make peace or war as they pleaſed. But there was a ſpecial providence of God in it, that his bleſſed Son, *the Prince of Peace*, ſhould be brought into the World in ſuch a ſeaſon of tranquillity. Accordingly we hear the Angels proclaiming at his Nativity, *Peace on earth, and good-will towards men.*

Secondly, WHEN he came to preach the Goſpel, he began his Sermon with, 'Bleſſed are the poor in 'ſpirit, bleſſed are the meek, bleſſed are the peace-'makers: and, Bleſs thoſe that curſe you, do good to 'them that hate you, pray for them that deſpitefully 'uſe you and perſecute you.' He calls upon his Diſciples to learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart, that they might find reſt for their ſouls. And when ſome of them would have called down fire from Heaven to have conſumed a City of the *Samaritans*, becauſe they refuſed them entertainment, he rebuked them, ſaying, *Ye know not what ſpirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them.* Briefly, when he was apprehended and brought to his tryal, he practiſed his own doctrine of meekneſs and patience very exactly. And when St. *Peter* drew his ſword in his defence, he commanded him to put it up again, *For*, ſays he, *all they that take the ſword, ſhall periſh with the ſword.*

Thirdly, WHEN he took his leave of his Diſciples, he bequeathed Peace to them, as the beſt legacy which he could leave them. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.* At his various appearances among them after his Reſurrection, he commonly ſaluted them with the bleſſing of peace: And it was his moſt ſolemn charge to them, that after his Aſcenſion, they ſhould diſtinguiſh themſelves from the people of the World,

by cultivating a ſtrict unity, peace, and love one with another.

Fourthly, One great end of our Lord's coming into the World, was, to break down the partition-walls between all Nations, and take away all party-diſtinctions from among men. He had been promiſed the *Heathen* for his inheritance, and the utmoſt parts of the Earth for his poſſeſſion: And he made it his buſineſs to gather men from all parts into one fold, under one ſhepherd. So that, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *in Chriſt Jeſus there is neither Greek nor Jew, Circumciſion nor Uncircumciſion, Barbarian, Scythian, Bond nor Free, but Chriſt is all, and in all.*

Fifthly, THE moſt ſignal act which entitles our Lord to the character of the Prince of Peace, is this, that he has reconciled us to God, and made an atonement for the ſins of the whole world. *God was in Chriſt*, ſays St. *Paul*, *reconciling the World to himſelf*, forgiving our ſins, blotting out the charge of diſobedience and ſentence of condemnation which ſtood againſt us; adopting us for the children of God, and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. 'Who now ſhall 'lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is 'God that juſtifieth, who is he that condemneth? It 'is Chriſt that died, or rather that is riſen from the 'dead, who ſitteth at the right Hand of God, to make 'continual interceſſion for us. Wherefore being ju-'ſtified by faith, we have peace with God, thro' our 'Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*.' So that in all the reſpects before mentioned, there is none that can, ſo properly as he, be ſtyled, *The Prince of Peace.*

BUT it may be objected, that there are ſayings in the *New Teſtament*, which ſeem contrary to ſome part of this character of our Lord. For at his preſentation in

in the Temple, *Simeon* pronounced of him, that he was appointed for the riſe and fall of many in *Iſrael*, and for a ſign that ſhould be ſpoken againſt, or an object of debate and contradiction. Our Lord himſelf ſays, that he came *not to ſend peace upon earth, but a ſword.* And after his departure, the preaching of his Miniſters occaſioned great tumults in many Cities, and got them the name of the men that turned the World upſide down. All this is very true, and yet no hindrance but that our Lord may juſtly be ſtyled the Prince of Peace. He offered it to a World that was at war with God, and could not eaſily be reconciled. Of which he had reaſon to complain in the words of his Anceſtor King *David*, *I labour for peace, but when I ſpeak unto them thereof, they make them ready to battle.* He came to reform the Religion of the World, which he could not do, without deſtroying the works of the Devil in it: Nor could this be done without demoliſhing Idols, and changing the corrupt faſhions and manners of men, which it was the intereſt of ſome and the pleaſure of others to maintain very ſtrenuouſly. This created, as it always will, great oppoſition to the work of the Goſpel. And this is the true and only reaſon of the fore-mentioned Texts, which ſeem contrary to the peaceable Spirit of Chriſt.

AND thus, upon a thorough diſquiſition of all the parts of this character in my Text, we find that it ſuits exactly well with the Evangelical Hiſtory of our Lord, and fits him incomparably better than it can do any other perſon.

TO conclude then: Let us reſolve to believe his wonderful Nativity, Life, Death, Reſurrection and Aſcenſion; let us hear the voice and follow the directions of this excellent Counſellor; let us embrace the

the Adoption which is offered us through this Son of God, and honour him even as we honour the Father: And let us ſtrive to make our Calling and Election ſure in him, who is the Founder and Author of everlaſting Salvation to us; that finally we may live with him who is the Prince of Peace, who ſhall put all enemies under our feet, and exalt us far above them all, even to that eternal and happy Kingdom where he reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, ever one God world without end.

SERMON

SERMON CXII.

On CHRISTMAS-DAY.

EVENING.

ISAIAH vii. 14.

Behold, a Virgin ſhall conceive, and bear a Son, and ſhall call his name Immanuel.

IN the former part of this Chapter, we are told of a great diſtreſs which *Ahaz* King of *Judah* was in from *Rezin* King of *Syria*, and *Pekah* King of *Iſrael*, who were entred into a confederacy againſt *Judah*, and had deſtroyed and carried away captive abundance of men and women, as you may ſee 2 *Kings* xvi. 2 *Chron.* xxviii. In which they were the Executioners of God's wrath upon King *Ahaz* for his abominable Idolatries, as it is there affirmed. But when he and his Counſellors were in the utmoſt conſternation upon a report that the confederate army was marching to beſiege *Jeruſalem*, ſo that their hearts were moved, as the trees of the wood with the wind; and as they were taking a view of the city-walls, to ſee what condition they were in for a ſiege, God ſends the Prophet *Iſaiah* to them, with a comfortable meſſage to aſſure them,

them, that their Enemies ſhould prevail no farther againſt them. And this he offers to confirm with a Miracle, which he ſubmits to *Ahaz* to chuſe what it ſhould be: but when *Ahaz* refuſed to name any thing, either out of contempt of the Prophet, or diffidence of God's mercy whom he had forſaken, the Prophet no longer applies to him in particular; but calls upon the whole Houſe of *David* to take notice, that God of his own free grace, and without their asking, would give them a ſign, which ſhould be this, That *a Virgin ſhould conceive, and bear a Son, and ſhould call his name Immanuel.*

WHICH words were undoubtedly underſtood by the ancient *Jews* to denote the Conception and Birth of the *Meſſiah.* For tho' the application of them to that event, is not to be found at this day in their *Targum, Talmud,* or *Rabboth*; yet St. *Matthew,* who was himſelf a *Jew,* and wrote his Goſpel chiefly for the inſtruction of *Jews,* quotes it in his firſt Chapter as fulfilled at the Nativity of *Chriſt*; which he would not have done, if it had not been the received Doctrine of thoſe times, that this Prophecy concerned the *Meſſiah.*

AS to the *Targum,* or *Jewiſh* Commentary upon the Prophets, it is the opinion of learned men, that ſeveral paſſages which were formerly in it, are now left out by the Modern *Jews,* that they might not give advantage to the Chriſtian Cauſe. Which paſſages they might omit with the greater ſecurity, becauſe there are but few Centuries paſt, ſince ſuch Writings were entirely in their own poſſeſſion. However, ſome Sayings there are, ſtill extant in their Writings, which agree well with this of the Prophet, as we ſhall ſee hereafter. But to return.

IT may be demanded, why theſe words were ſpoken to *Ahaz*, and what comfort they could afford to him at this time. Commentators are at a loſs how to make out the connexion between this Sign, and the impending danger which I juſt now mentioned. For how could a miraculous Birth, which was not to happen till ſix hundred years after, be a proper ſign of deliverance to the Houſe of *David* in the preſent diſtreſs? For, in the orderly courſe of things, the ſign ought to go before the thing ſignified, and a demonſtration of God's power ſhould be given, before the afflicted party can faithfully apprehend it, and rely upon it.

BUT yet a little conſideration may clear up this difficulty, and that which is too conciſe for us in the Prophet's language, tho' plain enough for the time and place it was ſpoken in, may bear this ſenſe in our more copious manner of ſpeaking: 'That God had a great 'work to do in the Houſe of *David*; that out of it a 'Virgin ſhould ariſe, who ſtill remaining a pure Vir-'gin, ſhould bring forth the *Meſſiah*, the Son of God 'into the World. And therefore it was a ſure ſign 'and token, that no adverſe power ſhould deſtroy 'this Family, till this ſignal event was accompliſhed 'in it.'

THE promiſes of the *Meſſiah* were generally known in *Jeruſalem*, and that he ſhould ſpring from the root of *Jeſſe*. But idolatrous *Ahaz*, like other revolters from God, had loſt his courage and underſtanding together with his religion. He had no faith, wretched man, to comfort himſelf with ſuch promiſes. He could think of nothing, high nor low, which could deliver him from the arms of his victorious Enemies. Therefore God himſelf by his Prophet ſuggeſts this Oracle to him, as a ſure anchor for him to reſt upon.

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It was an eternal Decree, not to be contravened by any power upon Earth. *Ahaz* might have asked in the height above, Fire from Heaven, as *Elijah* did, to conſume his Enemies: or in the depth beneath, the Earth to have opened and ſwallowed them up, as in the caſe of *Korah* and his company: and God could have wrought either of theſe ſigns by ſecond cauſes: But the Conception and Birth of *Immanuel* was a ſign which none but the Lord himſelf could give, even by giving himſelf to be ſo conceived and born.

NOW to this Interpretation of ours, the Modern *Jews*, and their friends the Deiſts, who envy us any prophecy that favours our Religion, make four objections.

THE *Firſt* is to the word, which we tranſlate *Virgin*; they pretend that the Original does not neceſſarily ſignify ſuch a one, but any young woman, even in a married ſtate: and they undertake to give an inſtance of this general meaning from *Prov.* xxx. 19. which I believe none but themſelves will allow to conclude the point as they would have it. However, as to its ſignification in this place, all our Writers down from *Juſtin Martyr* have anſwered them, that their own men both for Country and Religion, the LXXII Interpreters, have tranſlated this word by the *Greek* παρθένος, which ſtrictly ſignifies *a Virgin:* now they living near three hundred years before the Nativity of our Lord, could have no deſign to favour our cauſe by ſuch tranſlation, and therefore muſt needs be allowed as impartial evidence for us.

BESIDES, the deſign of the Prophet here, plainly obliges us to take the word in this ſenſe. For where is the ſign or miracle for a young woman to conceive, except only upon ſuppoſition that ſhe is even

then a pure Virgin? This we ſay hath happened but once in the World, in conſequence of this Prophecy, and by virtue of a Divine Power; and was therefore a true and proper Miracle; but our adverſaries interpretation leaves nothing ſignal or miraculous in this prediction.

Secondly, They object, that the accompliſhment of this prophecy is reſtrained by the context to ſuch an infant as is wholly of the common ſpecies of mankind. For it immediately follows, *Butter and honey ſhall he eat, that he may know to refuſe the evil and chuſe the good: i. e.* he ſhall be nurſed and grow like other children, ſo as to advance from weakneſs to ſtrength, and from ignorance to knowledge. And we admit that he did ſo. But if they argue, that ſuch perſon could not be the Son of God in our ſenſe, we deny the conſequence; for we hold that our Lord was improvable in his human nature, and at ſeveral ages had ſeveral degrees both of bodily ſtrength, and ſpiritual knowledge, according to that of St. *Luke*, who affirms, that *Jeſus increaſed in wiſdom and ſtature, and in favour with God and man.* For tho' his humanity was always ſanctified and dignified with the conjunction of the Divine Nature, yet the Divinity did not always manifeſt and exert itſelf with equal fulneſs, but only in proportion to the exigences of his miniſtry. And becauſe it was no part of his miniſtry to inform mankind of the preciſe time of the laſt Judgment, therefore he owns that this day was known only to the Father, and not communicated to him as the *Meſſiah.* In which capacity, tho' he never wanted the Divine Power to enable him to perform whatever he ſaw fit, yet the work of our redemption obliged him to ſubmit to all the infirmities of our nature, ſin only excepted; and conſequently

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he paſſed thro' the ſtages of helpleſs infancy and tender childhood, as well as other men.

THIS objection then, that the Child here promiſed to be given for a Sign, ſhould eat butter and honey, *i. e.* be fed and nurſed, and improve in underſtanding like other children, is no manner of prejudice to our Chriſtian ſenſe of the words of my Text, that the Child here promiſed is the *Meſſiah*. But indeed this ſame ſenſe muſt needs be carried thro' the context, to render it pertinent and fit to be ſubjoyned. For to what purpoſe ſhould the Prophet obſerve of a Child that was meerly human, that he muſt be nurſed and grow ſome time, before he could diſtinguiſh between good and evil? This is ſo well underſtood by every woman, that it would be a ſuperfluous and trifling obſervation. But take it as a continuation of the ſign which he had begun to ſpeak of, that a Child ſo wonderfully conceived and born, of ſuch Divine Original as to be *Immanuel*, God with Man, ſhould be ſubjected to the infirmities common to other children, this indeed is very aſtoniſhing, what our underſtanding could never have diſcovered, and therefore very fit to be foretold us by a wiſe and holy Prophet.

IN the *Third* place our Adverſaries ſay, that the accompliſhment of this Prophecy is reſtrained to the time wherein it was ſpoken, by this following Verſe, which ſays, that *before this child ſhould know to refuſe the evil and chuſe the good, the land which Ahaz abhorred, ſhould be forſaken of both her Kings, i. e.* of *Rezin* King of *Syria*, and *Pekah* King of *Iſrael*, mentioned before.

AND true it is, that the deſtruction of theſe Kings is limited to as ſhort a time as the infancy of a child. But then it does not follow from hence, that this individual Child here promiſed, ſhould be born into the

World before their deſtruction. For we muſt obſerve, that of all the Prophets which have ſpoken of the *Meſſiah*, *Daniel* firſt determined the time of his appearing, a circumſtance which *Iſaiah* and ſeveral others were ignorant of; and that without any diſparagement to their predictions of him; for they ſpoke as they were taught by the Spirit of God, who did not think fit to reveal the time of his appearing to them. For which reaſon ſome of them hoped to ſee him in their own days, according to that Saying of our Lord, that *many Prophets and Kings deſired to ſee the coming of the ſon of man*. *Iſaiah* prays for it, Chap. lxiv. *Oh that thou wouldſt bow the Heavens, and come down*; but not knowing when it would happen, he ſpeaks here upon ſuppoſition, that in caſe the Child here promiſed, were immediately conceived, yet before he ſhould be old enough *to know good and evil*, *i. e.* to expreſs his liking or diſlike of ſuch things as children are concerned with, the two Kings before mentioned ſhould be cut off from the face of the earth. And this indeed was punctually fulfilled. For in about three years after this Prophecy, *Rezin* fell in a war which he had with the *Aſſyrians*, and *Pekah* was ſlain by a conſpiracy of *Hoſhea*, who reigned in his ſtead, as we read 2 *Kings* xv, xvi.

AND now we may ſum up the argument which the Prophet offers for the conſolation of the Houſe of *David*, thus: 'Fear not, Houſe of *David*, be not 'afraid of thoſe who threaten to extirpate you: For 'God has a great work ſtill remaining to be done in 'your Family: out of which a Virgin ſhall ariſe, who 'continuing ſuch ſhall conceive and bring forth a 'Son, who ſhall be God and Man in one perſon. But 'yet you muſt not expect that he ſhall preſently 'ſhew forth the power of his Divine Nature; for he

'ſhall

'ſhall be ſubject in his infancy to the ſame infirmities,
'and require the ſame treatment as other children.
'And tho' I cannot inform you what time he ſhall be
'born, yet this I am commiſſioned to aſſure you, that
'if he were to be conceived immediately, theſe two
'Kings, *Rezin* and *Pekah*, ſhall be cut off, before he
'can arrive to the knowledge of good and evil.'

THIS, I think, is a juſt paraphraſe upon the words of the Prophet, and ſhews that they contain a clear promiſe of the *Meſſiah*, and a very good ground of encouragement to the Houſe of *David*, to hope for deliverance from their preſent Invaders.

BUT *Fourthly*, The Modern *Jews* pretend, that this Prophecy was actually accompliſhed in the birth of ſome other child. Some of them will have it fulfilled in *Hezekiah* the Son of *Ahaz*. But as they are generally bad Chronologers, ſo here they are ſadly out in point of time; for *Hezekiah* being twenty five years old when *Ahaz* was but thirty ſix, he muſt be twelve years old at leaſt, when this Prophecy was delivered; and the ſmall difference of age between him and *Ahaz*, hath inclined ſome to think, that he was not his Son by nature, but only by adoption: But this is contrary to Scripture. Other *Jews* will have the Child here promiſed, to be *Iſaiah*'s own Son, by his wife mentioned in the next Chapter: which we cannot allow of; for then there would be no ſign or miracle in his production, which yet is the very thing intended by it. *She ſhall call his name Immanuel.*

AND this leads us to enquire what ſort of perſon the *Jews* expected their *Meſſiah* ſhould be; and whether they had the ſame opinion of his Deity as we have. *What think you of Chriſt*, ſaid our Lord to the Scribes and Phariſees, *whoſe Son is he?* They anſwered,

The Son of David. Why then, ſays he, *does David call him Lord; ſaying, The Lord ſaid unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 'till I make thine enemies thy foot-ſtool. If David call him Lord, how is he his Son? And they were not able to anſwer him a word.* Which ſhews they did not acknowledge that the *Meſſiah* ſhould be the Son of God in the ſenſe we confeſs him: otherwiſe it had been obvious for them to anſwer, as any Chriſtian would have done, that Chriſt in his Divine Nature, as he was God, was *David*'s Lord; and as he was Man, he was his Son. And this indeed was the only way of ſolving the difficulty; which they not apprehending, were put to ſilence.

BUT theſe were Scribes and Phariſees, men bigotted to ſuperſtitious and ill-grounded Traditions, in the rubbiſh of which they had buried the genuine Senſe of the ſacred Text, and had figured to themſelves ſuch a *Meſſiah* as was to be no other than a meer human Heroe.

ON the contrary, the *Pſalms* and the Prophets plainly diſcover his Divine Nature to every one that reads them with an impartial eye. *Iſaiah* in my Text ſays, *he* ſhall be *called Immanuel*; which in the ſacred language is equivalent to this, *He ſhall be Immanuel*, God with us, God in our nature and likeneſs. And preſently in his ninth Chapter he cries out in his prophetick ecſtaſie, as if he had actually ſeen him incarnate, ‘ Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is gi-
‘ ven, and the Government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder,
‘ and his name ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſellor,
‘ the mighty God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince
‘ of Peace. Of the increaſe of his Government and
‘ Peace there ſhall be no end, upon the Throne of
‘ *David* and upon his Kingdom, to order it and to
eſtabliſh

'eſtabliſh it with Judgment and with Juſtice from 'henceforth even for ever.'

TO the ſame purpoſe the Prophet *Jeremiah* ſpeaks, Chap. xxiii. 5. 'Behold the days come, ſaith the 'Lord, that I will raiſe unto *David* a righteous 'Branch, and a King ſhall reign and proſper, and 'ſhall execute Judgment and Juſtice in the Earth. 'In his days *Judah* ſhall be ſaved, and *Iſrael* ſhall 'dwell ſafely. And this is his name whereby he ſhall 'be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUS-'NESS.'

I produce but a ſhort ſpecimen of thoſe many Prophecies which foretold that the *Meſſiah* ſhould have a divine as well as a human nature. Several of them are already applied to this purpoſe by our Lord and his Apoſtles in their diſputes with the *Jews*. That paſſage in the ſecond *Pſalm*, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, is greater, as St. *Paul* to the *Hebrews* obſerves, than any thing that was ever ſaid to Angels or Men, who notwithſtanding are ſometimes called *the Sons of God*, but in a ſenſe far inferior to this Son, whoſe Throne is ſaid to endure for ever and ever, which juſtifies our doctrine of him, that *he is God of the ſubſtance of his Father, begotten, not made, and has neither beginning of days, nor end of time.*

THE Envy of the Modern *Jews*, which carries them to oppoſe us in every thing relating to the *Meſſiah*, emboldens them at the ſame time to contradict their beſt Interpreters in this Article of *Chriſt*'s Divinity. For we have reaſon to believe, that their Commentators before *Chriſt*, unanimouſly underſtood the Prophets as we do. Beſides their gloſs upon the Texts I have already mentioned, and ſeveral others, wherein

wherein they plainly declare their Belief, that the *Meſſiah* ſhould be God as well as Man, they have left us evidences of the ſame Faith, in thoſe few Writings which we have been able to reſcue from the concealment or corruptions of their Succeſſors. A Commentator on the *Pſalms* (as quoted by *P. Mornay*) hath this paſſage; 'Whereas the *Gentiles* are always demanding of us, *where is your God?* Let them know, 'that the time will come when God ſhall ſit among 'his People, ſo that they ſhall be able to point him 'out with their finger.' Another ſaith, 'That the 'Everlaſting ſhall one day be as a Brother to *Jacob*, 'according to that of the *Canticles*, *Oh that thou waſt 'to me as a Brother:* and that he ſhall come in per-'ſon to eſpouſe his Church to himſelf:' exactly according to our Chriſtian Doctrine.

AS to the manner of his Incarnation, the *Cabbaliſts* are as refined as we can imagine. *Rabbi Simeon Ben Johai* in his Commentary upon *Geneſis*, ſays, 'That the Mercy of the Lord ſhall take a body in 'the womb of a woman; and that by the interven-'tion of this ſame Holy Body, the ſuperior and in-'ferior World ſhall be united together; ſo that God 'ſhall be ſanctified on Earth as he is in Heaven, and 'the Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt plentifully poured out 'upon men. And briefly, that the Woman of whom 'the Holy Word ſhould take his Body, ſhall be bleſ-'ſed and holy above all other Women.' *R. Berechia* ſays, 'The Birth of the *Meſſiah* alone ſhall be with-'out any defect.' Another ſays, 'He ſhall not come 'into the World like other creatures; none ſhall know 'the name of his Father, 'till he declares it.' And finally, a *Jewiſh* Commentator upon *Iſaiah* ix. where *Chriſt* is called, *the Everlaſting*, hath theſe words: 'In

'In the *Meſſiah* are two Natures or Sonſhips; one as 'he is the Son of God; the other as he is the Son 'of a Propheteſs. Both theſe Natures ſhall remain 'diſtinct, and yet make but one *Chriſt*.' Now this is as full to our point as we can wiſh. No Chriſtian of us all can ſpeak better of the eternal generation of the Son of God, and his immaculate conception as the *Meſſiah*, than theſe *Jewiſh* Commentators I have cited. So that I need not produce more of them to prove, that what we teach of the Divine Nature of Chriſt, is conſiſtent both with the Holy Prophets and ancient Rabbies; that from them we derive this Faith; and that the latter *Jews*, who take another way in interpreting the Prophets, do it in defiance to the ſenſe of their progenitors, only to gratifie their ſpleen and impotent malice againſt Chriſtians.

I ſhall only add, for farther confirmation of what hath been ſaid, that notwithſtanding the corrupt doctrines of the Scribes and Phariſees in our Saviour's days, yet even then we find *Jews* in the Goſpel, who interpreted the Prophecies concerning the *Meſſiah*, as we do, and owned them to be accompliſhed in our Lord. When *Nathaniel* was firſt introduced to him, and obſerved his Divine Wiſdom and Knowledge, he frankly confeſſes, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Iſrael.* St. *Peter* afterwards joyns the *Chriſt*, *i. e.* the *Meſſiah*, and the Son of God together, in his famous confeſſion of our Lord. I meddle not with the Sayings of *John* the *Baptiſt*, nor any thing in the Writings of the Apoſtles: I am only obſerving what notion they had of the *Meſſiah* as *Jews*, and which they brought with them, when they firſt came to *Jeſus*. And it plainly appears by their confeſſions, that they agreed with the Prophet *Iſaiah*, and acknow-

knowledged him to be *Immanuel*, God and Man in one perſon.

LET us now for a concluſion briefly touch upon the bleſſings which accrue to us from this alliance which God hath contracted with our nature. And to this contemplation the Prophet fairly leads us in this ſame Chapter. For in *Ahaz* we may ſee our own woful condition by nature. While he and his men ſtood trembling like leaves before two confederate Kings, who had given them dreadful experiments of their ability to deſtroy them, *Iſaiah* comes from God to encourage them with a Sign, that it was his good pleaſure to deliver them. Even ſo we were long under the ravage and tyranny of a triple alliance, the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil againſt us: each of which was ſingly an overmatch for us; how much leſs were we able to withſtand their united forces! And while we became a prey to their teeth, and were led captive by them at their will, having neither power to help our ſelves, nor a due ſenſe of our miſery; the Lord himſelf found out a way for our reſcue, this very way here intimated by the Prophet, in ſending *Immanuel*, his own Son, to be the Captain of our Salvation, thro' whoſe almighty Alliance we can now be more than Conquerors over all our Enemies.

FOR now we have an infallible ſign and pledge, ſince he hath taken our nature upon him, that it is his pleaſure to deliver us from all the miſeries of our fallen, undone condition, into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God. As a farther ſign of this, he hath diſtinguiſhed himſelf by the name of the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind, and declares that he was manifeſted for this purpoſe, that he might deſtroy Sin and Death, the Works of the Devil, *that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* LET

LET us then gather under his Banner, follow his ſteps, hear his voice, and he will lead us to certain victory and triumph. We have ſeen the ſigns of the Son of Man, and know that he hath been declared the Son of God by the Heavenly Powers. We have ſeen and heard the communication of his divine love to us, in his holy days, in his Goſpel, in his Church, in his Sacraments. In all theſe we ſee *Immanuel*, God with us; and in making a right uſe of all theſe, we ſhall one day ſee our ſelves with God, clothed with his immortality, inveſted with his righteouſneſs, ſhining in his glory, in that Heaven of Heavens to which he hath exalted our nature in his own Body, and where he liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, ever one God World without end.

SERMON

SERMON CXIII.

On the First Sunday *after* CHRISTMAS-DAY.

MORNING.

ISAIAH xxxvii. 31, 32.

And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah, shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall do this.

HOW this history comes to be read at this season, after it had been read once before, out of the Second Book of *Kings*, on the thirteenth *Sunday* after *Trinity*, is a matter which deserves consideration. I doubt not but the Compilers of our Liturgy had their reasons for this appointment. But because I have not yet met with any Book which discovers them, I will endeavour to assign such as I think are most probable, and carry the best appearance of weight with them.

First then; *ISAIAH* being a Prophet, who of all others is most copious in his visions and revelations of

of the coming of Chriſt, it was fit that ſuch a portion of his Book ſhould be read at this ſeaſon, as might inconteſtably and to the meaneſt capacity demonſtrate, that he was endued with the true Spirit of Prophecy. And ſuch demonſtration is fully given us in the matter of fact here laid before us. For when the *Aſſyrians* had overſpread the land of *Iſrael* and *Judah* with an impetuous tide of victory, and were juſt ready to inveſt *Jeruſalem* with a formidable army, while *Hezekiah* and his people ſaw nothing ſo certain before their eyes as immediate deſtruction, the Prophet *Iſaiah*, full of the Spirit of God, begins a ſong of triumph over haughty *Sennacherib*, telling him *that the daughter*, i.e. the city *of Sion*, *was hitherto a virgin*, had never been conquered, and ſo ſhould remain in ſpite of all his forces.

IN the perſon of God, and in a God-like ſtyle he thus mortifies his ſwelling pride. 'Do you know 'whom you have reproached and blaſphemed; a-'gainſt whom you have exalted your looks, and diſ-'charged your loud menaces? I have heard your im-'pious arrogance, how you glory in your hoſt, that 'you have ſurmounted the higheſt obſtacles, and 'drank up whole rivers with your multitudes. But 'you ſhould have learned this leſſon long ago, you 'might eaſily have learned it, that you were but my 'inſtrument and ſcourge to lay fenced cities in rui-'nous heaps. Who was it that enfeebled, diſmayed, 'and confounded the inhabitants? Who made them 'as unable to withſtand you, as the mown graſs? It 'was I, the Holy One of *Iſrael*. And now, ſince 'you have defyed me at my own city and temple, 'and filled my ears with your tumultuous blaſphe-'my, I will preſently make you ſenſible what you

'are

'are in my hands; I will put my hook in your noſe, 'and my bridle in your lips, and will turn you back 'by the way by which you came.' Then addreſſing himſelf to his own people, he graciouſly promiſes to ſupply their food which the Enemy had deſtroyed, in a miraculous way. And bids them fear nothing, for the *Aſſyrian* ſhould not ſhoot ſo much as an arrow againſt their city: 'For, ſays he, I will blaſt his army, 'the news of which will ſend him into his own coun-'try, and there he ſhall fall by the edge of the ſword.'

SUCH were the words of God by *Iſaiah*, concerning the fate of *Sennacherib*, and the deliverance of *Jeruſalem* from his invaſion; and the accompliſhment of them was ſo punctual, as plainly proved that they were indeed the words of God. This iſſue was ſo glorious and joyful to *Hezekiah* and his people, and ſuch an illuſtrious demonſtration both of the power and goodneſs of God, and of his ſpeaking by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, that the ſacred Pen-men thought fit to repeat it in their Writings, and for the ſame reaſons it is worthily repeated in the ſervice of our Church.

2*dly*, THIS hiſtory is a proper Leſſon at this Feſtival, as having an aſpect to the ſtate of Chriſt's Church, eſpecially in the infancy of it. For as *Sennacherib* the *Aſſyrian* thought utterly to have deſtroyed the Temple of God in *Jeruſalem*, ſo *Herod* the *Idumæan*, who reigned there at the Nativity of our Lord, as ſoon as he heard that he was come into the World, reſolved to ſend him quickly out of it again; and for that purpoſe ordered a troop of Soldiers to march to *Bethlehem*, where he was born; and becauſe he could not direct them to the particular houſe where they ſhould find the young King of the *Jews*, he commanded them to kill all the male infants under two years

years old, in *Bethlehem*, and in all the coaſts round about it; thinking that by taking this compaſs of time and place, he ſhould not fail to diſpatch our Lord among the reſt. And how was he delivered? why juſt as *Hezekiah* was reſcued from the ſword of *Sennacherib*, by the miniſtry of a good Angel. For his heavenly Father ſent his Angel to *Joſeph* in a dream, ſaying, *Ariſe, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and continue there till farther notice: for Herod will ſeek the young child to deſtroy him.* In like manner he warned the wiſe men of the Eaſt, who came to worſhip our Saviour, and ſpoke with *Herod* in their way to *Bethlehem*, and promiſed to bring him word where to find him: I ſay, God's Angel appeared to theſe men, and charged them not to ſpeak with *Herod* any more about it, but to return into their own country another way.

AND as *Sennacherib*, though he eſcaped the ſword of the deſtroying Angel, yet ſoon after was aſſaſſinated by his own children; ſo *Herod* ſurvived his impious and bloody attempt againſt our Lord but a ſhort time, probably not above two years; nor was he more fortunate than *Sennacherib*, in his own Family. For though his Sons did not ſhed his blood, yet they broke his heart, partly through their plottings againſt him, and partly through his jealouſie and cruelty towards them. Indeed the Tragedies in this *Herod's* Family were ſo unnatural and diſmal, that I never read nor heard of any like them. Firſt, he drowned *Ariſtobulus* his wife's brother, and afterwards put to death *Hyrcanus* their Grandfather, being eighty years old. Next, he brought his Queen *Mariamne* to a formal tryal and execution: and afterwards lamented the loſs of her, even to diſtraction. For *Joſephus* ſays

that ſhe excelled both in continence and courage, that ſhe was an exquiſite beauty, and of ſo agreeable a carriage as ſurpaſſed all thoſe of her time. After her death, his rage brought many more of his own relations to the like untimely end; as *Alexandra*, *Mariamne*'s mother, his ſiſter *Salome*'s husband, his three ſons, *Alexander* and *Ariſtobulus*, about a year, and *Antipater* five days before his own death. His own death concluded theſe Tragedies, which happened after this manner. He had a complication of diſeaſes, violent burnings, ulcers in his bowels, convulſions in his nerves, ſwellings in his legs and feet, aſthma in his lungs, rottenneſs in his joints, accompanied with direful itchings, ſwarms of worms, and intolerable ſmells: ſo that he was a mere hoſpital of incurable diſeaſes, and all the while had an inſatiable, voracious Stomach. Any one of theſe pains was enough to have put an end to mortal life; but *Herod* was continued for ſome time under them, for an example of the divine vengeance upon ſuch a tyrant as he was in other reſpects, but more eſpecially in his blaſpheming of God, and his ſeeking to deſtroy the beſt of *David*'s Sons, the beſt of the Kings of *Iſrael*.

NOW may we take up *Iſaiah*'s words, and with a little variation of them, triumph over *Herod*, and ſay, 'The infant King of *Iſrael* hath deſpiſed thee, 'and laughed thee to ſcorn. Whom haſt thou re-'proached and blaſphemed? and againſt whom haſt 'thou drawn thy ſword, and lift up thy ſpear? even 'againſt the Holy one of *Iſrael*. But he hath put 'his hook in thy noſe, and his bridle in thy lips, and hath brought thee down from the height of the 'mountains, from the ſides of *Lebanon*, and turned 'thy ſword upon thy own fleſh, and made thee a

'terror

'terror to thy ſelf. Haſt thou not heard long ago 'what his heavenly Father had decreed, and of ancient 'times how he had promiſed to exalt his Son above 'the Kings of the earth? Behold now he hath 'brought it to paſs, that thou ſhouldſt be the firſt 'Trophy of his irreſiſtible power, that by thy fate 'the World may know, that he will defend his Son 'for his names ſake, and for his elect and adopted 'childrens ſake.

3*dly*. HERE is comfort for the Church of God in the loweſt circumſtances and greateſt extremity. *The remnant*, ſays he, *that is eſcaped of the houſe of Judah, ſhall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward*. God's Heritage, by the invaſion of *Sennacherib*, was driven up into a narrow compaſs within the walls of *Jeruſalem*; and ſeemed like a handful of corn ready to be devoured by the fowls of the air. But theſe fowls were deſtroyed, and this handful was ſown in the ground, and multiplied ſo as to ſpread over the face of the earth. *For out of Jeruſalem went forth a remnant, and they that eſcaped out of mount Sion*. They eſcaped thoſe ſwords which were pointed at their throats; they went forth of thoſe walls wherein they were in a manner entombed, and accounted as dead corpſes.

IT is true, after three or four more Kings reigns, they went forth as far as *Babylon*, and lived there in a ſtate of captivity; and this too was foretold by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, which farther confirms the truth of his prophetick Spirit. 'God, ſays he to *Hezekiah*, 'will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the 'King of *Aſſyria*. But the days are coming, that all 'that is in thine houſe, and that which thy fathers 'have laid up in ſtore until this day, ſhall be carried 'to *Babylon*; and of thy Sons which ſhall deſcend

'from thoſe which thou ſhalt beget, ſhall they take 'away; and they ſhall be Eunuchs in the palace of the 'King of *Babylon*.' But how numerous are his predictions concerning their return from thence? From thence he promiſes a remnant which ſhould begin the Kingdom of the *Meſſiah* from mount *Sion*, and propagate his Worſhip from *Jeruſalem*. So *Euſebius* underſtood theſe words of my Text, interpreting them of the twelve Apoſtles, by whom they were moſt eminently fulfilled. And ſo *Iſaiah* declared before, Chap. xi. in moſt expreſs and emphatical words. 'In that day, ſays 'he, there ſhall be a root of *Jeſſe*, which ſhall ſtand 'for an enſign of the people; to him ſhall the *Gentiles* 'ſeek, and his reſt ſhall be glorious. And the Lord 'ſhall ſet his hand again the ſecond time to recover 'the remnant of his people which ſhall be left, from '*Aſſyria*, from *Egypt*, and from other countries. And 'he ſhall ſet up an enſign for the nations, and ſhall aſ'ſemble the out-caſts of *Iſrael*, and gather together 'the diſperſed of *Judah* from the four corners of the earth.'

UPON ſundry occaſions, more eſpecially in caſes of great diſtreſs and danger, ſuch as was that here before us, theſe Promiſes are made. And the ſeal and aſſurance of them is, *the zeal of the Lord of Hoſts*, and the oath which he ſware unto *David* his ſervant. The zeal, *i. e.* the high concern of God for his own glory, ſhall work out this redemption, which thoſe who are to be redeemed, neither deſerve, nor are able to effect. We ſay, and the Holy Scriptures teach us to ſay it, that the Church of God ſhall never be rooted out of this World, becauſe it is a ſchool of diſcipline for a ſelect number of people, whom he hath choſen and ordained to be numbered with his Saints in glory everlaſting.

laſting. Not that we may conclude from hence, as both *Jews* and Chriſtians have been apt to do, that the true Church ſhall never be removed from any particular nation or people, who once were in poſſeſſion of it: For the Scriptures of both Teſtaments affirm the contrary. 'I will break down the hedge and the wall of 'my unprofitable vineyard, ſays God by our Prophet 'Chap. v. and lay it waſte; it ſhall not be pruned nor 'digged; but there ſhall come up briars and thorns: 'I will alſo command the clouds, that they rain no 'rain upon it. The Kingdom of God, ſays Chriſt to 'the *Jews* of his time, ſhall be taken from you, and 'be given to a nation which will bring forth the fruits 'of it.' And though of his Church univerſal he hath affirmed, that *the gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it:* yet he threatned the particular Churches of *Aſia*, to deprive them of the light of his Goſpel for their unfruitfulneſs: as in fact we know he has done.

THE Church of God is compared to a vine, which has often been tranſplanted from one place to another, from *Chaldea*, from *Egypt*, from *Canaan*, into the iſlands of the *Gentiles*. And if we trace it, we ſhall find that it has been propagated by very ſlender ſhoots through ages and countries. Firſt *Abraham*, by God's appointment, was the founder of that religion which, for the ſubſtance of it, we profeſs at this day. And though he had a numerous poſterity, yet how few of his children were heirs of that faith and piety of his, which deſerved the name of true religion? Even of that branch which was the choſen ſeed, the greateſt part revolted to idolatry. And ſuch of them as were not idolaters, in the common ſenſe of the word, yet often followed ſuch ways as were quite contrary to the word and will of God. Our Saviour called thoſe of

his time, *an adulterous generation:* and when they gloried that *Abraham* was their Father, he denied their claim, telling them, that if they were *Abraham*'s children, they would walk in his ways and do his works. By which it appears, that he founded the relation to *Abraham* more in a ſimilitude of manners, than in a lineal deſcent and pedigree. And by the ſame rule he makes all the faithful ſervants of God related to himſelf; ſaying, *Whoſoever doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the ſame is my brother and ſiſter and mother.*

ACCORDING to which rule he would find but few related to him, even in his own Church, if he ſhould now come down upon earth, and perſonally converſe with us. For to paſs over thoſe, whoſe mouths are full of curſing and blaſphemy, who deny the Lord that bought them, and deſert from the ſtandard under which they were baptized, into the tents of impiety; if he ſhould ſeparate thoſe who call him Lord, from thoſe who do his will, how ſmall would be the number of Chriſtians indeed, in compariſon of thoſe who are ſuch in name? From whence we may learn,

1*ſt*, NOT to entertain mean thoughts of our Lord, becauſe there are but few ſincere Chriſtians. What ſays our Prophet *Iſaiah? Though the number of the children of Iſrael were as the ſand upon the ſea ſhore for multitude, yet a remnant*, a few only of them, *ſhall be ſaved.* And our Lord himſelf hath foretold us, that the way to his Kingdom is ſtraight and narrow, and that few there be that find it. And that many at the day of judgment ſhall plead the ſpirit of Prophecy, preaching, and working miracles in his name, who notwithſtanding ſhall be baniſhed his ſociety to all eternity. Likewiſe the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, writing to the *Corinthians*,

Corinthians, ſays, 1 *Cor.* i. 26. *Ye ſee your calling, Brethren, how that not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.* To the ſame purpoſe is that of St. *James*, ii. 6, 7. *Do not rich men oppreſs you? Do not they blaſpheme that holy name by which you are called?* Now if any man will ſay, that theſe characters belong only to the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, it were to be wiſhed, that he could prove what he ſays, to be true. But experience, which is inſtead of a thouſand arguments, is againſt him. For at this day, not many of the wiſe politicians of the World, not many rich, not many noble, render unto our Lord the honour due unto his name, nor worſhip him with an holy Worſhip. What then? ſhall we make the leſs account of our Chriſtianity, becauſe it has not a majority of votes on its ſide? No, but let it ſuffice us, that we can challenge all the great ones aforeſaid, to match it, or to produce any thing comparable to it, for the glory of God and the benefit of mankind. And this they confeſs in their ſerious intervals, eſpecially upon their death-beds. And they are no otherwiſe to be eſteemed of, than myriads who have lived under any virtuous inſtitution, and have not conformed to the rules of it. The fault is not to be laid upon the Inſtitution it ſelf, but upon the pride, ſenſuality and perverſeneſs of thoſe, who having been educated in it, have never ſubmitted to the laws and directions of it.

2*dly*, HENCE we ſhould learn to value the true religion and the profeſſors of it. It is an old obſervation, and certainly a true one, that 'God ſpares the 'bulk of mankind, and repleniſhes the earth with 'his Bleſſings, for the ſake of that ſmall family of 'children which he has amongſt us, and in proſpect of

'their farther encreaſe and improvement.' That the remainder of his Church might take root downwards, and bear fruit upwards, is the reaſon here given in my Text, why he delivered *Jeruſalem* from the ſiege of the *Aſſyrians*. No doubt but the greater part of the citizens were ſuch as deſerved the wrath of God. I believe this is, and always has been, the ſtate of all great cities in the World. And I think we may roundly conclude ſo of *Jeruſalem* from the character given of it in the beginning of the Book of *Iſaiah*. And for the demerits of ſuch men, the *Aſſyrians* were ſent to invade and diſtreſs them. But then there was ſtill a ſeed of God, a remnant, a ſmall number of truly pious and good people among them. In regard to whom, and that by them he might continue his Church, and extend it for the ſalvation of mankind, according to the promiſes which he had made to *Abraham* and to *David*, he delivered the whole city of *Jeruſalem* from *Sennacherib*, that the remnant might go forth for the purpoſes aforeſaid. And juſt ſo he dealt with the Ship's company which carried St. *Paul* from *Cæſarea* to *Rome*. When they were in danger of being caſt away in a tempeſt, an Angel of God appeared to *Paul* in a viſion by night, ſaying, *Fear not Paul, for thou muſt be brought before Cæſar; and loe, God hath given thee all that ſail with thee.* The whole company got ſafe to *Rome*, for the ſake of the Apoſtle, who was ſent thither to preach the Goſpel. This, I ſay, ſhould make us ſenſible, what a ſafeguard true religion and the profeſſors of it are to mankind.

3*dly*, HERE we may ſee God's zeal for his children, in working ſuch marvellous deliverances for them, though they are ſo few in number. One hundred

dred and eighty five thouſand *Aſſyrians* were deſtroyed from Heaven, as they were preparing to beſiege *Jeruſalem*, when there was not perhaps a tenth part of that number of true *Iſraelites* within the city. However, if they were much fewer, they were enough for a ſeed to preſerve the Church of God among men; and that was his end in ſaving them. He has wrought miracles for ſmall families, to ſave them, for the like reaſon. Thus he ſaved *Noah* by the Ark, and *Lot* by the hand of Angels, and the firſt Chriſtians by a ſpecial Revelation to depart from *Jeruſalem*, before it was deſtroyed by the *Romans*. I think I cannot cloſe this remark with better words than thoſe of St. *Peter* upon this occaſion, 2 *Pet.* ii. 9. *The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reſerve the unjuſt to the day of Judgment, to be puniſhed.* And therefore let us, in the

Laſt place, OWN our dependance upon God, and regard him as our only defence and ſalvation in time of trouble, ſeeking to him, as *Hezekiah* did here, by devout prayers and ſupplications, and craving the aſſiſtance of his Church and Miniſtry, as this King did of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, to obtain of him an anſwer of peace and love. But let not the day of rebuke and trouble, be the only occaſion of ſuch addreſſes. Let us walk with God in our daily converſation, and maintain conſtant communion with him. Let us be ſenſible not only of our wants, but his mercies, and abound in thankſgivings as well as prayers. Let us be true to our part of the Covenant of Grace, and as duly obſerve the honour, pleaſure, and will of God, as we hope for the benefit of his favour and protection. This will ſtir up his zeal for us,

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to be very nigh unto us in all that we call upon him for. Of ſuch ſeekers he will eaſily be found: to ſuch worſhippers he will ſhew himſelf a moſt gracious and bountiful Benefactor, through the merits and mediation of *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord; To whom, *&c.*



SERMON

SERMON CXIV.

On the First Sunday *after* CHRISTMAS-DAY.

EVENING.

ISAIAH xxxviii. 1.

In thoſe days was Hezekiah ſick unto death: and Iſaiah the prophet the ſon of Amos came unto him, and ſaid unto him: Thus ſaith the Lord, Set thine houſe in order; for thou ſhalt die, and not live.

IN the fourteenth year of King *Hezekiah*, ſays the ſacred Hiſtorian, came *Sennacherib* King of *Aſſyria* againſt the Cities of *Judah:* And in thoſe days, ſays my Text, was *Hezekiah* ſick. So that theſe two calamities, of war and ſickneſs, came upon *Hezekiah* in the ſame year. For he reigned twenty-nine years, and his reign being lengthened fifteen years from this time, it is plain that he fell ſick in the ſame year of *Sennacherib*'s invaſion, *i. e.* in the fourteenth year of his reign.

BUT

BUT it is a queſtion amongſt Commentators, whether the invaſion or the ſickneſs happened firſt, or both at the ſame time. Great Criticks think that they came together, which they conclude from verſe 6 of this chap. where God aſſures the King by his Prophet, that he will deliver him and his City out of the hands of the *Aſſyrians*. This Aſſurance might be given to the King and his People, to comfort them againſt any farther attempts which the *Aſſyrians* might make upon them. And ſo we may take the narrative of *Hezekiah*'s ſickneſs in the order wherein it ſtands, ſo as to follow the deſtruction of the *Aſſyrian* army. But it is of little moment whether they came together or apart; only we muſt ſay that they happened in the ſame year.

NOW this ſickneſs was very grievous, upon ſeveral accounts.

Firſt, FOR the nature of the diſeaſe, which is ſuppoſed to have been peſtilential; for it was attended with a very painful ſwelling: By reaſon whereof *Hezekiah* complains that he had no reſt night nor day: That his bones felt as if they were all broken: That he chattered like a crane or a ſwallow, and mourned like a dove, and was not able to lift up his eyes, they were ſo oppreſſed with heavineſs.

Secondly, THE pain of his diſtemper was aggravated with the ſentence which the Prophet paſſed upon him in the name of God; for *Iſaiah* made him a viſit upon this occaſion, to acquaint him, that it was the divine Will and Pleaſure that he ſhould continue no longer in this life, and to adviſe him accordingly to ſettle his affairs, to make his will, and appoint his ſucceſſor. So that *Hezekiah* had nothing to do, but

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to conſider himſelf as a dying man; the hope of recovery, which very much contributes to the cure of any diſtemper, was taken away from him. He concluded, as he tells us, that his days were cut off; that he was going directly to the gates of the grave; that *he ſhould not ſee the Lord in the land of the living, nor behold man any more with the inhabitants of the world.*

Thirdly, *HEZEKIAH*'s ſickneſs and ſentence of death were embittered with this conſideration, that he was going to be cut off in the ſtrength of his age; for he was not yet forty years old. And therefore he complained that he ſhould be deprived of the reſidue of his years, which by the ordinary courſe of nature he might have lived. This ſhortning of life was always eſteemed as one of the calamities of our mortal condition; eſpecially in ſo high and happy a ſtation as that of a King. *David* prayed againſt it, ſaying, *O my God, take me not away in the midſt of my age.* We doubt not but death, whenever it happens, tranſlates every good man from this life to a better. But if our reward ſhall be proportioned to the work which we do on this ſide the grave, we have reaſon, with humble ſubmiſſion to the will of God, to deſire that he would grant us time and ſpace for the accompliſhing of any good work.

Fourthly, THAT which made *Hezekiah* more loth to leave the world at this time was, that he had no child to ſucceed him in his Throne. It is probable that at this time he was neither father nor husband: But it is certain that his ſucceſſor was not born till three years after. Now when a man has an eſtate and honour to leave his children, it is one part of infelicity to have no child to leave for ſuch inheritance.

And

And it was much more ſo in the caſe of the Kings of *Judah*, who had ſingular bleſſings entailed upon their poſterity by many ancient Prophecies and Promiſes of God.

SUCH were the reaſons which aggravated *Hezekiah*'s pains in his ſickneſs, and made him deſirous to continue longer in this life. And therefore when he heard his doom from the mouth of *Iſaiah*, he turned his face towards the wall, and put up an earneſt petition to God, that he would be pleaſed to recall his ſentence, and reſcue his ſoul from the pit of corruption, that he might yet be a father of children, and make known to them the loving-kindneſs of the Lord. This requeſt he enforces with the following arguments.

Firſt, HE begs of God to *remember how he had walked before him hitherto in truth, and with a perfect heart.* This is teſtified of him in the hiſtory of the Kings, that he did that which was right in the ſight of the Lord, according to all that *David* his father did. For whereas *Jehoſhaphat*, and other Kings before him, who bore a good character in matters of Religion, yet ſuffered their people to do thoſe acts of worſhip in high-places, which ſhould have been performed at *Jeruſalem*, *Hezekiah* removed thoſe high-places, broke the images, cut down the groves, and aboliſhed the brazen Serpent which *Moſes* had made, becauſe the people burnt incenſe to it.

Secondly, WHEREAS other Kings had been too apt to conſult their eaſe and carnal intereſts in the practice of Religion; *Hezekiah* had a true and thorough Zeal for the glory of God in all that he did. He found the divine Worſhip almoſt loſt in a heap of errors

errors and idolatries; with which mens minds were ſo poſſeſſed, that a ſudden reſtoration of the truth ſeemed to be both difficult and dangerous. Yet *Hezekiah* did not poſtpone any thing, or excuſe the preſent doing of it with that faſhionable plea of waiting for a more favourable opportunity: But he laid the Law of *Moſes* before him as the ſtandard and meaſure of his reformation, and purſued it exactly, truſting God with the conſequences of it, and not doubting but he would bleſs and protect him in the way of his duty.

THIS is the ſubſtance of *Hezekiah*'s plea, which he urged to move God to ſpare that life which hitherto he had made a good uſe of: And he urged it with importunate cries and tears, which prevailed with God to hear him, and grant his requeſt.

FOR *Iſaiah*, who had brought him tidings of his death, was departed from him but a little way; before he was gone out into the middle court, ſays the Hiſtorian, the word of the Lord came to him, commanding him to go back again, and tell *Hezekiah*, *Thus ſaith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have ſeen thy tears: Behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the King of Aſſyria: and I will defend this city. And this ſhall be a ſign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing which he hath ſpoken. Behold, I will bring again the ſhadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the ſun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the ſun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.* In the Hiſtory of the *Kings* this is related a little otherwiſe. There the Lord promiſes to heal *Hezekiah* ſo ſpeedily, that in three days time he ſhould be able to go up to the Temple.

Temple. The King deſires that ſome token might be given him, to certify him that it ſhould be ſo. The Prophet offers him his choice of a token. *Shall the ſhadow of the dial*, ſays he, *go forward or backward ten degrees? Hezekiah* anſwered, *It is a ſmall thing for it to go forward, let it rather return backward ten degrees.* This token was to be a miracle ſhown upon a ſun-dial, and I think the wonder would have been much the ſame, whether the ſhadow had gone forward or backward, becauſe I ſuppoſe either way it would have been done in a moment. If this ſudden movement was made in a dial which ſtood abroad, and went by the ſun, it muſt be effected by a quick change of the ſun's place in the Firmament, and then it muſt be a miracle all over the world. But if upon a dial-plate, ſuch as we now have in our houſes, the hand went back ten degrees, or hours, this might be done without any alteration of the ſun's courſe, and then the miracle was only to *Hezekiah* and his family. And a miracle it would have been, to have ſeen this contrary motion at the bare word of the Prophet, without the hand or art of man to cauſe it: And it would have been as ſignificant to the ſick King, to teach him that the ſame Power which wrought this, could as eaſily ſet his life back, and prolong the number of his days upon Earth.

BUT Commentators obſerve, that all the ancient Doctors, both *Jews* and *Chriſtians*, took the words of *Iſaiah* to ſignify, that the Sun and all the heavenly Bodies went back upon this occaſion. They would rather have ſaid, that the change was made by a counter-turn of the Earth, if they had been acquainted with the preſent moſt rational ſyſteme of Aſtronomy, without

without any alteration in the courſes of the heavenly bodies. Tho' to theſe bodies the holy Scriptures aſcribe the motions which make day and night, ſummer and winter. But this is done in compliance with the common apprehenſions of mankind, and their way of ſpeaking all the World over, and lays no prohibition upon learned men to conceive otherwiſe of them; ſince which way ſoever the motions are effected, the heavenly Appearances to us are ſtill the ſame.

SOME think this lengthening of the day was recorded by the wiſe men of *Babylon* and *Egypt*, who were certainly curious in making aſtronomical obſervations. We find indeed, 2 *Chron.* xxxii. 31. that the King of *Babylon* ſent Ambaſſadors to *Hezekiah* to congratulate him upon his recovery, and to enquire into the circumſtances of the miracle which was wrought for him. But from this enquiry we cannot conclude whether the miracle were of a publick or a private nature: For they might be informed of it by report, without ſeeing it. But that which we read in *Herodotus* his Hiſtory, looks more like a publick Record of this kind, *B.* ii. *c.* 142. where he writes, how the *Egyptian* Prieſts affirmed to him, that their anceſtors had obſerved the Sun to have riſen twice in the *Weſt*, and to have ſet as often in the *Eaſt*. Which obſervations might be taken from the two extraordinary days we read of in Scripture, that in the time of *Joſhua*, and this in the life of *Hezekiah*.

BUT I proceed to a ſpeculation of a more theological nature, which is, to conſider how what is ſaid here, may be reconciled with the veracity and unchangeable decrees of God. For firſt here is a meſſage brought to *Hezekiah* by the Prophet, that he muſt

not expect to recover of his ſickneſs, but prepare for death: And immediately the ſame Prophet pronounces a contrary ſentence, that he ſhould recover and live fifteen years longer: Which looks like a great change in the divine Will.

FOR the ſolving of this difficulty, ſeveral things may be ſaid.

AS *Firſt*, That God's promiſes and threatnings are conditional; but are often expreſſed poſitively, and the condition on which they depend is to be ſupplied and underſtood by us. Tho' the Prophets themſelves have ſometimes failed in the underſtanding of it: Which was plainly the caſe of *Jonah*: For his meſſage being given him in poſitive terms, that *Niniveh ſhould be overthrown in forty days*, he did not make the exception in his own mind, *unleſs they repented*, and ſo thought himſelf much diſparaged that his prediction was not fulfilled: Whereas it was God's intention from the firſt to ſpare them, upon condition that they took warning in time and repented. And indeed this was the reaſon why he ſet them a time; for had he been fully reſolved upon their deſtruction, he might as well have executed it without giving them any warning; but this was what the Prophet did not conſider.

Secondly, IT is likely that God revealed to *Iſaiah*, that *Hezekiah*'s diſtemper was of a mortal ſort, and that in nature there was no poſſibility of his recovery; and ſo the Prophet was to tell him. But notwithſtanding this, the King rightly believed that God was able, by his all-ſufficient Power, to repair the breaches and defects of nature; for which purpoſe he made his earneſt ſupplication to him. Such a

power

power of the Deity has ever been acknowledged by all conſiderate people, who never imagined that there was ſuch a fatality in ſickneſs, or in death, but that God could grant life whenever he ſaw fit. Thus *Jairus* in the Goſpel addreſſes to Chriſt, *Matth.* ix. *My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and ſhe ſhall live.* In like manner the ſiſters of *Lazarus* acknowledge, *John* xi. *Lord, if thou hadſt been here, our brother had not died.*

THIS, I think, concludes ſtrongly enough, that there is no ſuch period ſet to every man's life, nor ſuch ſort of death appointed from his birth, as ſome have imagined. But that God gives us (to many of us at leaſt) a longer or ſhorter continuance in this world, according as we behave our ſelves in it; for ſo he has often declared in his word, and ſo our own experience teaches us in abundance of inſtances. 'Tis true, many of the reaſons of life and death paſs man's underſtanding, and are known only to God; but yet there are many others which we cannot avoid ſeeing very plainly. Who can deny that multitudes deſtroy themſelves by their own miſ-conduct, by their immoderate luſts and paſſions, any one of which often cuts the thread of life? And others on the contrary live long and well, who would have died much ſooner, had not they governed themſelves by the rules of piety and virtue.

PIETY muſt evermore crown our virtue, if we deſire to be ſhrowded under the wings of God's protection from the dangers and misfortunes which ſurround us in this mortal ſtate. I know the enemies of Religion would fain perſuade the world, that virtue is of it ſelf a ſufficient ſecurity to mankind. And

this they glory in, that many of their impious tribe are men of virtue. But whatever they may ſeem to themſelves, or to the world, they cannot be really and intrinſically virtuous. For Sin and *Satan* will be predominant, where-ever the Spirit of God, which theſe men do not pretend to, is wanting. And we may as well expect that a bad ſoil ſhould, without any care and cultivation, produce good fruit, as that the heart of man ſhould naturally, and without the influence of divine grace, abound with virtuous affections.

HOWEVER, let theſe men enjoy all the health and long-life which temperance can afford, of which they are the reward, and may be had by theſe men, ſince they are to have none other hereafter; yet can temperance heal every diſeaſe of body and mind? or can it defend us from thoſe evil accidents which are without us, and in the power of other agents to inflict? But it is clear, even to a demonſtration, that our prayers to God often procure for us, either a total exemption from many calamities, or elſe a happy iſſue out of them. Of the truth of which there cannot be a better proof than the account of *Hezekiah*'s recovery here before us.

FOR firſt *he was ſick unto death*, ſays my Text, and had the ſentence of death actually paſſed upon him by his Prophet, who was the Meſſenger of God, and acted in his name. And yet his earneſt prayers and tears prevailed with God to reſcue him from this imminent death, and prolong his life with an addition of fifteen years, and crown them with peace and proſperity.

THAT

THAT all this mercy and loving-kindneſs was vouchſafed to *Hezekiah* as a return of his prayers, is apparent from the anſwer of God by the Prophet, in theſe words: *Go tell Hezekiah, Thus ſaith the Lord God of David thy father: I have heard thy prayer, I have ſeen thy tears: Behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years*, &c. Upon the whole it is certain, that this ſickneſs had put an end to *Hezekiah*'s life, if he had not earneſtly prayed to God to ſpare him; and that God was moved by his prayers to reverſe the ſentence of death which was gone out againſt him, and to grant him a longer continuance upon the throne of his Kingdom.

WHAT now ſhall we ſay to thoſe men who would perſuade us, that all things come to paſs in the world by a fatal neceſſity, and that a man's piety hath no influence upon the affairs of his life? Why we can confute them effectually from the Hiſtory of the life of *Hezekiah*, who by his prayers obtained two miraculous deliverances; the firſt from the army of the *Aſſyrians*, the ſecond from a deadly fit of ſickneſs. In both which caſes matters were ſo tranſacted between God and the King by the miniſtry of the Prophet, as to leave no room for a cavilling Atheiſt to impute theſe deliverances to the wit of man, lucky chance, or turn of fortune; but he muſt be dumb, or confeſs that they were wrought by the ſupernatural power and hand of God ſtretched out from Heaven, as it is here repreſented.

THIS is written for our admonition, to excite us to be very diligent and devout in the worſhip of God, ſince the iſſues of life and death, and of all human affairs, are not only in his hands, but very

much at the diſpoſal of our prayers. The voice even of natural Religion proclaims, that *in God we live and move and have our being*; but the Oracles of our holy Scripture aſſure us, that God is our moſt merciful and gracious Father, that he is nigh unto all them that call upon him, that he hears their prayers, and will deny them no manner of thing that is good for them.

IF the revelation which God hath given us of himſelf, had taught us to conceive of him no otherwiſe than as an auſtere and inexorable Lord and Maſter, who had ſettled all things in ſuch an order, that they muſt iſſue from one another by a neceſſary chain of conſequences, and that all our prayers, ſervices, and endeavours could render them neither better nor worſe, then indeed we ſhould have reaſon to leave them out of our prayers, and have no concern about them. But our ſacred Teachers have given us a more amiable and gracious Image of our God, and placed us in a nearer relation to him, even in that of dear children to a tender parent, who purſues no will of his own ſeparate from our real intereſts, but in his government of this world accommodates himſelf to our circumſtances, giving us the good things of this life, ſo far as he ſees they will be profitable to us. But upon this condition, that we render him the duty and obedience of children, that we make a good uſe of his gifts, and glorify him for them, and acknowledge him to be the fountain and donor of them.

WITH theſe diſpoſitions we have not only a licence, but a command to ask every thing that is requiſite both for our ſouls and bodies. Our Lord, who admoniſhes us not to overcharge our hearts with the

cares

cares of this life, hath inſtructed us at the ſame time to make our daily prayers for all things that are needful, and to implore God's protection againſt the evil both of ſin and of ſuffering.

AND he ſays abundance of things to convince us, that the reaſon why we labour under the want of many comforts is, becauſe we want that faith and zeal and fervency in prayer, which are proper for the obtaining of them at the hands of God.

I conclude therefore, that no man knows what he loſes, when by any ſuggeſtion of wicked men or Devils, he is drawn away ſo, as to neglect the worſhip of God. By ſuch neglect he cuts himſelf off from the fountain of life and happineſs, he throws himſelf out of the Almighty's Protection, he expoſes himſelf to all manner of dangers and miſchiefs ghoſtly and bodily. I am very ſure, that the reaſon why mankind groan under ſuch a load of calamities is, their ingratitude and rebellion againſt the God and Father of all mercies; whom if we would but agree to worſhip with that reaſonable ſervice which he requires of us, if we would but turn our blaſphemies into prayers, and our atheiſtical debates into praiſes and adorations, we ſhould quickly find light ſpringing up in our darkneſs, mirth inſtead of mourning, the ſcourge of diſeaſes and pains would be removed far from us, and we ſhould rejoice in the love and peace and ſalvation of God.

WHEN, O when ſhall it once be, that we will awake out of our deluſions, and lay hold of the real benefits which are offered us? When will we leave our broken ciſterns, and return to the fountain of living waters? When will we turn away our ears from thoſe

pernicious temptations which ſeduce us to the infernal pit, and hearken to the voice of Wiſdom which leads us to the Kingdom of our gracious Lord?

LET us look back with regret upon thoſe precious days and years, wherein we have wandred from the right way, and now at laſt reſolve to keep to it, and perſevere in it ſtedfaſtly to the end of our race, that we may find that door of mercy which ſhall admit us into our Father's houſe, to the inheritance of the bleſſings there purchaſed and prepared for us by his Son *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, to whom, *&c.*

SERMON CXV.

On the Second Sunday *after* CHRISTMAS-DAY.

MORNING.

ISAIAH xli. i.

Keep ſilence before me, O iſlands, and let the people renew their ſtrength: let them come near, then let them ſpeak: let us come near together in judgment.

IT is obſervable, that the Prophecy of *Iſaiah* abounds with great variety of religious inſtructions, ſerious admonitions, ſharp reproofs, ſevere threatnings to obſtinate ſinners, and gracious promiſes to the penitent, humble ſervants of God. And as he plainly pronounces God's ſentence upon *Iſrael*, that they ſhould be carried into captivity for their ſins; ſo by the ſame authority he aſſures them, that they ſhould be reſtored to their own Country again; and that in proceſs of time both *Jews* and *Gentiles* ſhould be gathered into one Church and Kingdom under the reign of the *Meſſiah*, whoſe character and government he

delights

delights to ſet forth and dwell upon. Theſe things he often repeats, that they might be ſure to be underſtood and regarded, and he adorns them with all the beauties of an elegant ſtyle and moving rhetorick, as they well deſerved.

IN order to facilitate the converſion of the *Gentiles*, he enters into a ſerious debate with them concerning the vanity of their own Idols, and the all-ſufficient power, wiſdom, and goodneſs of the God of *Iſrael*. That is the ſubject of this xli chapter here before us; which begins with the words of my Text, commanding all the World to be ſilent, that the following diſcourſe might be heard diſtinctly and with a ſuitable attention. *Keep ſilence before me, O iſlands*, i. e. hearken all ye foreign Countries; for all nations which were parted from *Jewry* by the ſea, were, in the idiom of their language, ſtyled iſlands. *Let the people renew their ſtrength*; let them muſter up all the arguments and objections they can think of, againſt what I am going to ſay; *let them come near and ſpeak*, and joyn iſſue with me in the cauſe which is now to be tried between us.

I. AND the firſt inſtance which he propounds of the power, wiſdom, and goodneſs of the God of *Iſrael*, is, in the life and fortune of a righteous man, whom he raiſed up and made famous in the eaſt. Now becauſe this man is not called here by any proper and peculiar name, therefore interpreters are divided about him, who he ſhould be. Some will have him to be *Cyrus* the *Perſian*, who reſtored *Iſrael* from *Babylon* to their own Country. But though he was the beſt of the *Perſians*, yet I think he cannot be called *righteous*, if that word ſignifies, as I apprehend

hend it always to mean in holy Scripture, one who is *right in his religion*, i. e. a worſhipper of none but the true God, which the *Perſians* were not at that time. Beſides, ſeveral of the following parts of this deſcription cannot well be adjuſted to *Cyrus*. Others therefore underſtand it of *Abraham*, and his ſeed according to the Promiſe in general, and more eſpecially of the *Meſſiah*; to whom how it may be adapted, let us now proceed to enquire.

TO begin with *Abraham*. It is ſaid of him, that God called him from his Country, from his kindred, from his father's houſe, into a ſtrange land which he knew nothing of. That *Abraham* obey'd the divine Command, and went the way wherein God led him. That while he ſojourned among various nations, differing from him in religion, manners and faſhions, God was his ſhield and ſafe-guard, enriching him with money and ſervants, flocks and herds, and ſuffering no man to do him any conſiderable injury. Inſomuch that when *Pharaoh* King of *Egypt*, and *Abimelech* King of *Gerar*, took his wife from him in order to marry her, as thinking ſhe had been his ſiſter, God reproved them for it in viſions of the night, and laid his afflicting hand upon them, which he would not remove till they had reſtored her. And when four Kings invaded the place where *Lot* dwelt, and carried him away captive, *Abraham* armed his trained ſervants, being three hundred and eighteen, and purſued theſe ſpoilers, and reſcued *Lot* from them, with all the ſpoils which they had taken.

AND how God promiſed to multiply the children of *Abraham* as the ſtars of Heaven for multitude, and that he would give them the land of *Canaan* for an inheri-

inheritance, and raiſe up one from among them, in whom all nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed, is well known to us all. So that now we may thus read the words which God ſpeaks here by *Iſaiah*, and compare them, and ſee how they correſpond with *Abraham* and his Poſterity.

'I have, ſays God, raiſed up the righteous *Abra-*
'*ham* from the eaſt, I have called him to my foot,
'to follow me ſtep by ſtep, juſt as I ſaw good to lead
'him: he not knowing from time to time which way
'he was to travel, but depending wholly upon my
'direction. I gave the nations of *Paleſtine* before
'him, and made him rule in his Poſterity over their
'Kings; whom I gave as duſt to his ſword, and as
'driven ſtubble to his bow. So that he purſued them
'with ſucceſs, and paſſed on with ſafety in a way
'which he had never travelled before.'

ALL this, I ſay, is very applicable to *Abraham* and his poſterity; of whom God ſpeaks as of one man, *calling the generations*, as he ſays here, *from the beginning*, and leading them through Countries which they were not acquainted with; where they might have been ſurprized by ſavage beaſts, or by ambuſcades of thoſe People whoſe lands they came to poſſeſs, had not God watched over them, and gone before them, as he did in the Wilderneſs, by a cloud in the day-time, and by a pillar of fire in the night, directing them whither to go, and when to reſt, and fighting their battels for them, whenever they came to engage with their enemies. *The iſles*, ſays he, *ſaw this, and feared, the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near and came.* The wonderful works which God wrought for *Iſrael* in *Egypt*, in the Red-ſea, in the Wilder-

Wilderneſs, and at *Jordan*, were publiſhed by fame all over the eaſt, and alarmed the People near whom they approached in their travels, with fearful apprehenſions. But what effect had this fear upon the *Gentiles?* did it turn them from their idolatry to worſhip the God of *Iſrael?* Not generally: ſome few *Gibeonites* and others were converted; but the moſt part encouraged one another in their oppoſition: *they drew near and came, they gathered together*, and by their mutual exhortations to one another, were the more confirmed and hardned in their ſuperſtitions; as hoping that the more intent and conſtant they were in that which they counted piety to their Gods, the better they ſhould be defended from invading *Iſrael.* 'They helped every one his neighbour, and every 'one ſaid to his brother, Be of good courage. So 'the Carpenter encouraged the Goldſmith, and he 'that ſmoothed with the hammer, him that ſmote 'the anvil, ſaying, It is ready for the ſodering: and 'he faſtened it with nails, that it ſhould not be mo-'ved.' This is ſpoken in great ſcorn and deriſion of Idolaters: it repreſents them as ſweating hard about making thoſe Images, which when finiſhed, were to be fixed in a certain place, and had no power to go before them, and help them againſt their enemies. It explodes the trade of Image-founders and ſtatuaries, as profitable to none but the workmen, who are glad when they have a call for ſuch manufactures. Whereas they would work more to the purpoſe, more to the ſervice of war, if they were imployed in making arms for the uſe of living men, rather than in faſhioning dead images, which have neither hands nor feet to help them.

NOW

NOW this diſcourſe was very ſeaſonable at the time when it was delivered, when *Iſrael* was partly gone and partly going into captivity among idolatrous nations. It was a caveat to their conquerors, that they ſhould not triumph upon this occaſion, and ſacrifice to their Idols, as if they had proved themſelves ſuperior in power and wiſdom to the God of *Iſrael*. It was a comfortable admonition to the captives, to remember what God formerly had done for them, and thence be aſſured that he would fulfill all his Promiſes of future good things to them.

'THOU art my ſervant, O *Iſrael*, *Jacob* whom 'I have choſen, the ſeed of *Abraham* my friend, with 'whom I covenanted, to be a God to him and to 'his children for ever. In whom I have taken you 'from the ends of the earth, from among the chief 'men thereof, and ſaid, Thou art my ſervant; I have 'choſen and not rejected thee. Fear not, for I am 'with thee: be not diſmayed, for I am thy God: 'I will ſtrengthen, help, uphold thee with the right 'hand of my righteouſneſs. All they that were en-'raged againſt thee, ſhall be aſhamed and confoun-'ded: they that ſtrive with thee, ſhall be as nothing, 'they ſhall periſh. For I the Lord thy God will 'hold thee by thy right hand, ſaying, Fear not, I 'will help thee. When thou ſhalt ſeem reduced to 'the deſpicable condition of a worm, trampled upon 'by every one that paſſeth by, and thy people few 'and forgotten, like dead men out of mind, even 'then will I redeem thee, and raiſe thee up again to 'invincible ſtrength; Thou ſhalt be to the ſtrong 'mountains and hills, *i. e.* to the Kings and Nations 'of the *Gentiles*, the ſame as a threſhing inſtrument

is

'is to the corn: Thou ſhalt beat them ſmall as the 'duſt, thou ſhalt bruiſe them as the chaff. Thou 'ſhalt fan them with the wind, the whirlwind 'ſhall ſcatter and diſperſe them. But thou ſhalt re-'joice in the Lord; thou ſhalt glory in the holy 'One of *Iſrael*.'

Theſe are profeſſions of God's moſt tender mercies and affections towards the houſe of *Iſrael*; they ſet forth the very yerning of his bowels towards them; and ſhew, that tho' his juſtice and truth made it neceſſary for him to give them up into captivity, as the puniſhment which was by covenant annexed to thoſe ſins which they had committed againſt him: yet he could not utterly withdraw his mercy and loving-kindneſs from them; he would not ſuffer their enemies to ſwallow them up, and make a full end of them. He would certainly viſit and redeem them, and plant them in their own land again, even with the deſtruction of thoſe that held them in bondage.

THIS God is ſo much concerned to imprint upon their minds, and perſuade them to believe, that the Promiſes of it make up a great part of this and other books of the Prophets. For tho' *Iſaiah* begins with ſuch a black catalogue of *Iſrael*'s provocations, and preſents ſuch a cup of fury which God was pouring out upon them for the ſame, as is enough to make the ears of thoſe that hear him to tingle; yet if we take his book throughout, I believe we ſhall find in it more comfortable words of mercy than menaces of judgment.

IN the argument here before us, ſee how careful he is to ſilence all doubts and objections which might

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be ſtarted concerning God's power to raiſe his people again from the moſt abject forlorn condition.' 'Who raiſed up the righteous *Abraham* from the 'eaſt, and carried him ſafe through ſo many dangers, 'and ſettled us his children in this land againſt ſo ma-'ny ſeeming impoſſibilities? This was the God of 'our fathers, who is ſtill as mighty to deliver us their 'children: and if he promiſes it, he will as ſurely 'perform it. Behold he promiſes, ſaying, When the 'poor and needy ſeek water, and there is none, and 'their tongue faileth for thirſt; I the Lord will hear 'them; I the God of *Iſrael* will not forſake them. 'I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in 'the midſt of vallies; I will make the wilderneſs a 'pool of water, and the dry land ſpringing wells. 'I will plant in the wilderneſs the cedar, the ſittah, 'the myrtle, the oyle-tree: I will ſet in the deſert the 'firr, the pine, the box trees together. That 'they may ſee, and know, and conſider, and under-'ſtand, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and 'the holy one of *Iſrael* hath created it.'

THESE are delightful ſayings to thoſe that dwelt in the eaſtern Countries, which were commonly parched with heat and thirſt. I take them to be an alluſion to thoſe refreſhments which God had afforded his People of old, when they came out of *Egypt*; whereby he ſtirs up their childrens minds to depend upon him for the like in their own neceſſity.

But II. THIS righteous man of the eaſt here ſpoken of, may be, and by the beſt Interpreters is underſtood prophetically to denote our bleſſed Saviour, who is likewiſe of the lineage of *Abraham*, that branch of him which the ſacred Oracles foretold ſhould ſpread over

over all the World, under whoſe ſhadow all nations of the earth ſhould find joy and conſolation. He is undoubtedly that perſon promiſed to *Jeruſalem*, ver. 27. who ſhould bring good tydings, which is but another phraſe for preaching the Goſpel: to which the *Gentiles*, ſpoken to in my Text, are moſt properly and nearly concerned to liſten. For to them this Preacher of righteouſneſs was to be ſent, in order to turn them from the worſhip of Idols, to the acknowledgment of the living God, the God of *Iſrael*. And the arguments of this chapter are an excellent plea for their converſion. From hence they might learn what great things God had done for one ſingle family whom he had made choice of, to bear his name and maintain his religion. How he had revealed himſelf to them, and covenanted with them. How he had given them a copy of that Covenant in writing, containing the hiſtory of what he had done in and from the creation of the World, and predictions of what ſhould come to paſs in future generations. By comparing of which things together, they might ſee that he is the firſt and the laſt, the almighty, faithful and true God. As he had fully demonſtrated himſelf to be, by all his diſpenſations both of mercy and judgment, in the government of his people. In both which reſpects he had made bare his arm from Heaven, and wrought innumerable miracles.

DID the enemies of his people ſometimes prevail over them? The *Gentiles* might poſſibly think that they prevailed againſt God; but when by the preaching of his word they came to know the truth, they would find it quite otherwiſe. In his own word they would find it foretold, how he would give up his People in-

to the hands of their enemies, when they revolted from him to idols: and how he would reſtore them again, when they truly repented and returned to him. All which was fulfilled accordingly. For their ſtrongeſt Alliances could not prevent their captivity, when they deſerved it: nor could the arms which ſubdued them, detain them any longer than the time appointed by their God. When he was reconciled to them, and undertook to deliver them, nothing could ſtand in the way of their return. *Egypt* and *Babylon*, Gods, Kings and Princes, all powers ſpiritual and ſecular, fell before the naked captives.

TO all this, ſays *Iſaiah*, *liſten ye Gentiles.* When Jeſus Chriſt came into the World to make the God of *Iſrael* known upon earth, and his ſaving health among all nations, he made him known chiefly, by publiſhing every where, what was hidden from them before, I mean the true ſenſe of the Law and the Prophets. Thoſe ſacred books were certainly written with larger views than to a few narrow generations of men. What a light of the *Gentiles* do we ſee in this ſingle Prophet *Iſaiah*, which was but little obſerved at its firſt riſing, at the time when he lived and ſpake the words of this Prophecy? but now ſhines like the Sun at noon-day. That divine Spirit which foreknows all things, inſpired him to treat of ſuch arguments as were moſt proper to prepare the way of the Lord, and lay the foundations of the Goſpel. It was foreſeen, that when the *Gentiles* ſhould be invited to change their Religion, they would ask what they ſhould gain by ſuch a change. The firſt and greateſt Apoſtles of Chriſt asked the ſame queſtion. To which *Iſaiah*, ſpeaking, as he often does, of the bleſſings and glories

glories of Chriſt's Kingdom, gives a moſt ſatisfactory anſwer.

WE cannot doubt but the Spirits whom the *Pagans* worſhipped, perſuaded their votaries, that the changes which Chriſtianity made in the world, were much to the damage of mankind. And we learn from hiſtory, that they did commonly make ſuch objections. *Zoſimus*, who wrote a compendious hiſtory of the *Roman* Emperors, to his own time, the beginning of the fifth Century, imputes the decay of their Empire to the prevalence of Chriſtianity. He was but one of many that laid this imputation upon it; nor was the decay of the Empire only, but any other publick calamity, the ſubject of their imputation. This awakened the Chriſtians to write apologies for their religion, in which they learnedly and largely vindicate it from ſuch accuſations; as may be ſeen in their Books, particularly in *Arnobius* a Rhetorician of *Sicca* in *Africk*, who flouriſhed under *Diocletian*, about the year 300, and once thought Chriſtianity detrimental to human affairs, but afterwards ſaw reaſon to change his mind and defend it. 'Look 'into your hiſtories, ſays he, and ſee if there have 'not been earthquakes, wars, famines, peſtilences, *&c.* 'before our time. On the other hand, we have now 'had Chriſtianity near three hundred years in the 'World; have we had nothing but wars, bad ſea-'ſons, calamities, ſince it appeared? Your annals will 'inform you of innumerable victories, advantages of 'commerce, means of cheap and plentiful living, 'which we have enjoyed in that time.' With much more to the ſame purpoſe.

TRUE it is, that about this time the *Roman* Empire fell into great decay; but what was the occaſion

caſion of it? It was occaſioned by the removal of the Imperial Seat from *Rome* to *Conſtantinople*. And what was the cauſe of this removal? Why the affronts which *Pagan Rome* offered to *Conſtantine* the Great, then Emperor, becauſe he was a Chriſtian; ſo that he could have no ſatisfaction in living among them, as *Zoſimus*, the moſt zealous patron of the old ſuperſtition, confeſſes.

BUT was not *Conſtantine* himſelf victorious? Yes, he has left many monuments of his victories, whereby he wreſted the Empire out of the hands of ſeveral powerful competitors of the Pagan religion. And that it was given him as the reward of his embracing Chriſtianity, appears from the ſign of the Croſs which was ſhewed him in Heaven at noon-day, and a direction which he had about it in a viſion at night, that he ſhould make a military ſtandard, and bear that figure in it, and be ſure to conquer under it: The truth of all this he declared upon oath to *Euſebius* Biſhop of *Cæſarea* in *Paleſtine*. He obeyed, and proſpered accordingly.

AS to the hiſtory of the following times, no body that knows it, will pretend to deny, that of *Conſtantine*'s three ſons, among whom he divided his Empire, two went to war one with the other, in which one of them came to an untimely end. But this is what we complain of, that Chriſtian Princes too often bring thoſe controverſies to the deciſion of the ſword, which might and ſhould be amicably accommodated, without the effuſion of Chriſtian blood.

WHETHER there have been as many wars amongſt Chriſtians as Pagans, I will not venture upon the ſudden to affirm. But this I will ſay, that if all the wars in Chriſtendom were examined by the Goſ-

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pel of Chriſt, I am afraid we ſhould have much ado intirely to juſtifie one in a thouſand. In the management of which, thoſe Prophecies which foretell, and thoſe Goſpels which injoyn unity, peace, and love, in the kingdom of Chriſt, are ſadly violated. I wiſh there were other ways of ending national differences among Chriſtians; which I am perſuaded might be found out, if diligently ſought after. And then, if we were only to bear arms againſt thoſe who are ſworn enemies to the name of Chriſt, we might cheerfully depend upon the Promiſes of God, contained in this chapter and other parts of his word, that he would fight our battels, and give us the victory over ſuch enemies.

HOWEVER, theſe violations of chriſtian love and charity, are no more objections againſt the ſanctity and excellency of our religion, than other crimes of a more private nature; which are all forbidden by the Laws, and yet too commonly practiſed in the lives and converſations of Chriſtians. Concerning which we muſt ſay, that God and his Chriſt are righteous, and we their pretended ſervants are diſobedient and wicked.

IF our religion did but prevail in the World to any degree that might be called a prevalence, without doubt many calamities of war, peſtilence, famine, *&c.* which we often labour under, might be prevented: For theſe are the ſcourges of God, which he would never inflict, where his own Law was reaſonably well obſerved. In that imperfect ſtate which it obtains amongſt us, it has from firſt to laſt very much improved our bodily welfare and outward circumſtances, as might be ſhown by comparing our preſent refine-

ments and reformations from the barbarity, or rather brutality of old Paganiſm, which was once the religion of our Country.

BUT ſince our Chriſtianity, and all the publick benefits of it, are liable to vary, according to the various humours of thoſe men who profeſs it, we muſt conſider the Prophet as ſpeaking, what we might and ſhould be, rather than what we are; and pray for thoſe times which ſhall be bleſſed with a fulneſs of the felicities and glories of the kingdom of Chriſt; and endeavour, every one for his own particular, to haſten them, by cultivating thoſe graces of the Spirit of Chriſt, which may prove to our ſouls like fountains of water to a thirſty ſoil, and repleniſh our barren hearts with ſuch fruits as are ſubſtantial and comfortable to ourſelves, profitable to our brethren, and acceptable to God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord: To whom &c.

SERMON CXVI.

On the Second Sunday *after* CHRIST-MAS-DAY.

EVENING.

ISAIAH xliii. 1, 2.

But now, thus ſaith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Iſrael: Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou paſſeſt through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the Rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee: when thou walkeſt through the fire, thou ſhalt not be burnt, neither ſhall the flame kindle upon thee.

THE Viſion of *Iſaiah*, 'tis well known, contains a repreſentation of the preſent and future ſtate of *Iſrael* and *Judah*. Their ſtate in his time was very corrupt with reſpect to religion and virtue; on which account he denounces God's Judgments which were ready to fall upon them for their ſins, and ſhould be

inflicted by the *Aſſyrians*, *Babylonians*, and other hoſtile nations round about them. And becauſe ſome of his expreſſions might be interpreted as if all the Twelve Tribes ſhould be utterly caſt away, therefore he frequently interſperſes ſuch conſolations as this in the words of my Text, to aſſure the people, that if they were duely corrected and reformed by their Captivity, God would bring them out of it, and raiſe them up again to be his Church and People.

TO confirm them in the belief of ſuch a reſtoration, he puts them in mind of ſeveral arguments and reaſons to expect it, which are briefly intimated in the words here before us.

Firſt, HE tells them, that upon their repentance God had promiſed them ſuch a reſtoration. He promiſes it often, by this very Prophet, which was ground enough for them to depend upon it, if they had not been otherwiſe aſſured of it. But indeed their moſt ancient Oracles had foretold this. When *Moſes* had threatned them with various Judgments, and particularly that they ſhould be made captives and ſcattered among the Heathen, in caſe they broke the Law and Covenant of their God, *Deut.* xxviii, xxix. he proceeds to aſſure them, that if in ſuch circumſtances they would return to the Lord, and obey his voice with all their heart and ſoul; that then he would turn their captivity, and gather them out of all nations where he had ſcattered them.

LIKEWISE the *Pſalmiſt*, recognizing the Divine promiſes to the Houſe of *David*, *Pſalm* lxxxix. introduces God ſpeaking thus: 'If his children for-'ſake my Law, and walk not in my Judgments; if 'they break my Statutes and keep not my Command-'ments: then I will viſit their tranſgreſſion with the

'rod,

'rod, and their iniquity with ſtripes. But yet my 'loving-kindneſs I will not utterly take from him, 'nor ſuffer my truth to fail. I have ſworn by my 'holineſs, and I will make it good to *David*, that his 'ſeed ſhall endure for ever, and his Throne ſhall be 'as the Sun before me.' This is a very clear and peremptory promiſe: how it hath been performed, muſt be a hard queſtion for the *Jews* to anſwer; but we who believe *Jeſus* the Son of *David* to be the *Meſſiah*, can eaſily prove the accompliſhment of it.

Secondly, *ISAIAH* calls upon the people to conſider, that this promiſe of Salvation is made to them by that God, *who created Jacob and formed Iſrael.* This indeed is a common topick of conſolation to every pious man, that he who created him, will have mercy on him, and is able, in all circumſtances, to make good his promiſes, and preſerve the work of his own hands.

BUT it was very proper for this people above all others to make ſuch inferences, becauſe they had been in a peculiar manner created and formed of God. For their Anceſtors *Iſaac* and *Jacob* were born of women that were for a great while barren, and were ſent into the World on purpoſe to fulfil a Prophecy which had been revealed before they had any being, that in their Seed all the Families of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed. Now this promiſe having not received its accompliſhment in the days of *Iſaiah*, it was very fit that he who was often warning them of their approaching captivity, ſhould likewiſe aſſure them of their reſtoration from it, ſince God's great end of creating them and forming them into a nation, could not be anſwered but by ſuch a reſtoration. They were ſprung from a

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root which, according to the courſe of nature, was incapable of producing them, and conſequently were of miraculous birth and extraction: they were gathered into a Church and People, that was to retain the knowledge of the true God ſo long, 'till the *Gentiles* were enlightned with it. This was not yet done: therefore they might hope to continue a Church and People 'till it was effected.

Thirdly, THEY might conclude this from former redemptions which God had wrought for them. *Fear not*, ſays he here by *Iſaiah*, *for I have redeemed thee.* He redeemed *Abraham* from the idolatry of his native Country and Father's houſe; he redeemed *Iſaac* from death, when he was bound upon the Altar, and the knife was lifted up in order to ſacrifice him. He redeemed *Jacob* from the fury of his brother *Eſau*, when he had reſolved to kill him. He redeemed the firſt-born of this people in *Egypt*, when he ſlew thoſe of the *Egyptians*; and diſappointed *Pharaoh*'s deſtructive Edict, when he commanded all their males to be drowned. And finally, he redeemed them from theſe Task-maſters, and from the *Amalekites*, *Canaanites*, *Philiſtines*, and other enemies which, humanly ſpeaking, were too ſtrong for them, and would have ſwallowed them up, if God had not manifeſtly interpoſed, and made bare his arm in their defence. By the experience of ſuch redemptions they might well conclude, that, if they reformed the corruptions of their religion and morals, for which God viſited them, he would ranſom them from their approaching Captivity.

Fourthly, A fourth ground of *Iſrael*'s hope for God's future mercies, were the gracious appellations which he

he had beſtowed upon them. *I have*, ſays he, *called thee by thy name; thou art mine.* He had changed their Father *Jacob*'s name to *Iſrael.* He had named them, *his holy nation, his peculiar people.* For this he commands *Moſes* to aſſure them from him, *Exod.* xix. 5, 6. *If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my Covenant, then ye ſhall be a peculiar treaſure unto me above all people: ye ſhall be my Kingdom of prieſts and my holy Nation.* Thus to *Iſrael in Egypt* he ſends meſſages by the ſtyle of the God of their Fathers, *Abraham, Iſaac* and *Jacob:* and demands their releaſe of *Pharaoh*, ſaying, *Thus ſaith the Lord God of Iſrael, Let my people go.* In general he calls *Iſrael* his elect, and his firſt-born, intimating that he had a greater portion of love and bleſſings for them than for other people. It is averred by *Moſes* and *David*, that God had owned them and preferred them before all others by the choiceſt and moſt illuſtrious of his mercies. Accordingly we find that our Lord imployed his own perſonal miniſtry, for reducing the loſt ſheep of the houſe of *Iſrael.* And St. *Paul* argues, *Rom.* xi. from their prerogative in the divine favour, that God had not utterly caſt them off. His endearing appellations are thus proved to be a good ground for his people's hope and truſt in him.

Fifthly, A farther argument to *Iſrael* to truſt in God, were the Deliverances which he had vouchſafed to ſome of them from the moſt mercileſs and devouring Elements of fire and water. *When thou goeſt*, ſays he, *or haſt gone*, as the original imports, *thro' the waters, they have not overflowed thee; and thro' the fire, it hath not kindled upon thee.* The waters of the univerſal Deluge did not overflow their Anceſtor *Sem*, whom God

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ſaved in the Ark with *Noah* his Father. The waters of the Red Sea did not overflow this people, when they fled thro' it on foot from the face of the *Egyptian* army: for God divided them by a mighty wind, and made them ſtand as firm as a wall on each hand of them. The waters of *Jordan* in like manner, and by the ſame Almighty Power, were parted aſunder before this people, and left a dry ford for them to go over.

FROM the violence of Fire was *Abraham* delivered, according to an ancient Tradition of the *Jews*, who ſay, that when he refuſed to worſhip the Idols of the *Chaldeans*, they threw him into the fire, which was one of their Deities; but that God ſo reſtrained the power of it, that it did not hurt him. There is ſomething in Canonical Scripture which favours this Tradition. For whereas it is ſaid that *Abraham* came out of *Ur* of the *Chaldees*; this word *Ur* ſignifying both the name of a City, and *Fire*, ſeveral Interpreters have taken it in this latter ſenſe; and St. *Jerom*, tho' he rejected it at firſt, yet afterwards he was pleaſed with it.

THIS being an ancient opinion, it is not improbable but that St. *Paul* might have an eye to it, *Heb.* xi. when he reckons amongſt God's renowned ſervants, ſome who by virtue of their faith *had quenched the violence of fire*. We know that the ſame Idolaters who perſecuted *Abraham*, I mean the *Chaldeans*, caſt three worthy men of his poſterity into the fire, for refuſing to worſhip their Idols; out of which the God of *Abraham* ſafely delivered them. Several more ſuch deliverances might poſſibly be known to the Prophets, tho' their Hiſtories are now loſt to us: and to them *Iſaiah* might allude in the words of my Text; tho'

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by his prophetic Spirit he might foreſee the fiery tryal of the three men laſt mentioned, and fortifie their courage with this gracious promiſe of God, that *when they walked thro' the fire, they ſhould not be burnt, neither ſhould the flame kindle upon them.*

AND thus we have ſeen how the words of my Text were applicable to the people of *Iſrael* and *Judah* in the circumſtances they were in, when *Iſaiah* lived amongſt them, and addreſſed himſelf to them.

BUT in the farther application of them, we muſt go by that general rule which St. *Paul* lays down for ſuch occaſions, *Rom.* xv. 4. That *whatſoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we thro' patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

THE words we are treating upon, are certainly a common Topick of conſolation to all the faithful Servants of that God, who firſt dictated and inſpired them. So that to find our own bleſſing in them, and to underſtand them as the voice of our own merciful Father, we have nothing elſe to do, but to approve ourſelves his obedient children; for he is no reſpecter of perſons, nor confined to any one nation or people, but equally good and gracious to all thoſe who equally love and fear him.

Firſt then, AS God promiſed his people a reſtoration from their captivity, upon their true repentance and return to their duty; ſo will he reſcue us all from the ſlavery of ſin and Satan, if we do in good earneſt feel the oppreſſion and miſery of it, and would much rather be imployed in doing God's will, and keeping his Commandments. This diſpoſition the *Jews* manifeſted in their Captivity at *Babylon:* they were deeply

deeply humbled for their former tranſgreſſions of God's Law, and the affronts they had offered him by worſhipping of Idols. They now deteſted all ſuch lying vanities, tho' adored in the city where they ſojourned, and kept conſtantly to their hours of prayer, with their faces turned to *Jeruſalem*, and poured forth ardent petitions to be reſtored to that place, where they might ſerve the God of their Fathers according to his own holy Covenant. I do not ſay they were all thus penitently and piouſly affected; but that many were ſo, appears from the Books of *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, *Daniel*, and many of the *Pſalms* compoſed upon that occaſion. And doubtleſs the holy Spirit of God had a regard to this happy change of their minds and manners, when he dictated the words of my Text. For he aſſures us by this ſame Prophet, that *there is no peace to the wicked*. So long as men continue in their ſins, they are at enmity with God, excluded from the benefit of his promiſes, and liable to all his threatnings and judgments.

Secondly, WAS it an argument to *Iſrael* to truſt in God, becauſe he had created them and formed them in ſo ſpecial a manner as is before repreſented? The like conſideration is equally comfortable to every member of the Church of Chriſt. For in him we are regenerate and born again, we are become new creatures. We who before lay under the ſentence of eternal death, are by his Spirit raiſed up again and quickned to immortal life. We that were under the tyranny of the Prince of Darkneſs and his reprobate Legions, are hereby reſcued into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God.

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THE Spirit of God ſpeaking by the Prophets, ſtyles the Kingdom of Chriſt *a new heaven and a new earth.* And tho' the completion of ſuch prophecies muſt not be expected till the end of this world, yet the beginnings and foundations of ſuch a happy ſtate are certainly laid here. I have often wiſhed that we could fix in our minds juſt ideas of the different ſtates of mankind, under the errors of Paganiſm, and the Religion we now profeſs. We ſhould then be convinced, that as bad as the world is, it is much better than when dumb Idols were the Deities of it. Whether we conſider the external face of things, or the inward affections and diſpoſitions of men, we ſhould ſee that the Chriſtian world is much more commodiouſly inhabited, and the inhabitants better diſpoſed to all ſocial offices of humanity and charity now, than when it was inveloped in the darkneſs of Heatheniſm. And if the world be much the better for Chriſtianity, notwithſtanding the very partial and imperfect practice of it, to what degrees of happineſs might it be improved, did we all obſerve the Goſpel of our Lord according to the true intent and excellency of it? Then ſhould we joyfully praiſe God that he hath created us anew, and formed us into the ſpiritual vineyard of his Church, which is productive of the beſt fruits.

Thirdly, ALL the redemptions which God vouchſafed to *Iſrael*, are proofs to us of his infinite power and goodneſs, and figures of greater things which he will do for us. For he firſt commanded *Abraham* to ſacrifice his ſon, and then redeemed him by ſubſtituting another ſacrifice in his ſtead; hereby preſignifying that he would give his own Son to die for us,

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and make an atonement and propitiation for our ſins. He led the children of *Iſrael* thro' the *Red-ſea*, figuring thereby his holy Baptiſm, and teaching us that we muſt be born of Water and of the Spirit, before we can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE great ſtruggle they had with difficulties in the Wilderneſs, and with various Enemies, before they were poſſeſſed of the promiſed Land, is a proper type and reſemblance to us of the oppoſition we muſt expect from the enemies of our Religion, our Virtue, and our ſpiritual Welfare, and that we muſt thro' much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.

THE Power and Goodneſs of God was magnified in carrying this people thro' the ſea, preparing a table for them in the Wilderneſs, fighting their battles, and raiſing them again when they had loſt themſelves: And their infidelity and ingratitude was betrayed in their murmurings and repinings, their revolts to idolatry, their hardneſs of heart, and incorrigibleneſs under chaſtiſements. *Now all theſe things*, ſays St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. x. *happened unto them for enſamples, and are written for our admonition, to the end that we ſhould not luſt after evil things, as they luſted. Nor tempt Chriſt, as ſome of them tempted him, and were deſtroyed of ſerpents.* If we diſhonour him by our blaſphemies, we forfeit our title to the benefit of his redemption: And then nothing remains for us, but to fall a prey to the old Serpent, who brought ſin and death into the world, from which Chriſt alone is able to deliver us.

Fourthly, IF God's gracious appellations of *Iſrael* aſſured them of his ſpecial regard for them, no leſs ground of rejoicing have we in the like aſſurances of his favour towards us. For the Scripture teſtifies that God

God hath called us in Chriſt to be his adopted children, to be fellow-heirs with Chriſt of his heavenly Kingdom. Our Lord himſelf hath ſeveral ſayings which amount to as much as this. *Fear not, my friends, them that can kill the body. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you.* And in the terms of the neareſt affection and endearment he declares, *that every one who doth the will of his heavenly Father, is his brother, and ſiſter, and mother.* And a little before his Aſcenſion, he ſends this gracious meſſage to his Diſciples, *I aſcend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.*

IN conſequence of theſe declarations of our Lord, Believers are dignified in the Apoſtolick Writings with moſt honourable titles; as, *the ſaints, the beloved, the elect of God. Ye are,* ſays St. *Peter,* 1 Pet. ii. 9. *a choſen generation, a royal prieſthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye ſhould ſhew forth the praiſes of him who hath called you out of darkneſs into his marvellous light.*

BUT it was not without a ſpecial providence of God, that in a ſhort time all the world, both friends and enemies, agreed to call the ſervants of Chriſt by a name derived from his own, *Chriſtians.* Which as it is a title of the higheſt dignity on account of its root and derivation, ſo is it moſt proper to put us continually in mind of the love, fidelity, and duties we owe to Chriſt our head. For with a ſmall variation of St. *John*'s words, 1 *John* iii. we may triumphantly ſay, 'Behold what glorious marks of divine love are 'beſtowed on us, that we ſhould be called the Sons 'of God, and Brethren of Chriſt!' Our relation to him ſhould make us conſider our ſelves as ennobled far above any dignity which the world can impart to

us, and conſequently ſhould animate us with a zeal to acquit our ſelves in all things as becomes men who are called by ſo worthy a name; and to be very circumſpect that we do not give the profane world any occaſion, by word or deed, to blaſpheme that holy Name by which we are dignified. In which if we are careful, we ſhall maintain our own honour and comfort in it, and may with pleaſure conceive God ſpeaking to us in the words of my Text, *I have called thee by the name which thou beareſt; thou art mine.*

Laſtly, IN caſes of extreme danger, particularly in perils of fire and water, God has ſhown himſelf the ſame in the Chriſtian, as he was of old in the *Jewiſh* Church, a ſufficient helper to deliver out of ſuch troubles. Thus our Lord delivered St. *Peter*, when he walked on the water going to meet him. Thus he ſaved one *Victor* an aged *Roman*, who happening to be all alone in a ſhip that had neither rudder nor any victuals in it, was ſuddenly driven from the port of *Sardinia* to ſea by a ſtorm, and there toſſed for ſome weeks together, till at laſt he was brought ſafe to the coaſt of *Lucania* in *Italy*, and there landed. Whereupon he declared that he owed his deliverance to the viſible appearance and aſſiſtance of Chriſt and his Angels; as *Paulinus* Biſhop of *Nola* in *Campania*, a grave writer of the fifth Century, relates this event. Likewiſe in the monuments of the martyrdom of St. *Polycarp* Biſhop of *Smyrna*, we are told, that when fire was put to the wood which was to burn the holy Man, it preſently raiſed a great flame, which caſt it ſelf into the figure of an arch or half-circle, like the ſail of a ſhip ſwelled with wind, and bore away on every ſide from *Polycarp*'s body; ſo that his executioners not being able to burn him, were forced to diſpatch him with a ſword.

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BUT to conclude; we need not multiply hiſtories of this kind: They are only intended to demonſtrate to us God's all-ſufficiency, that he is able to deliver us from all dangers ghoſtly and bodily: And more particularly to convince us of his power and good pleaſure to ſave us with a much greater ſalvation than any of theſe: That we may put our full truſt and confidence in his gracious promiſes, that he will deliver our ſouls from being overwhelmed with thoſe ſtorms and tempeſts which the World or the Devil raiſe againſt us; and preſerve both ſoul and body from the everlaſting burnings of the world to come. Which deliverances he vouchſafes to all thoſe who ſerve him according to the Goſpel of his bleſſed Son. To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt be all Honour and Glory world without end. *Amen.*

FINIS.